

EXPOSITIONS WITH OBSERVATIONS Sometimes, on Severall SCRIPTURES.

Divided into four Parts.

- I. An Exposition on Christs Sermon, as it is related in the fifth, sixth, and seventh, Chap. of *Matthews* Gospel.
 - II. The sum or substance of *Jerusalem's Song of Triumph*, being an Exposition of the ten first Verses of the second Chapter of the first Book of *Samuel*.
 - III. A Basket of Fragments, containing chiefly Expositions upon Particular Select Scriptures, somewhat Promiscuously set down.
 - IV. An Exposition on the first Epistle of *John*.
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By ISAAC PENINGTON (Junior) Esq.

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EXPOSITIONS

WITH

OBSERVATIONS

SCRIPTURES





AN
EXPOSITION

On that Large SERMON of CHRIST, &c.

MAT. V. VERS. I. to XLII.

1. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a Mountain: and when he was set his Disciples came unto him.
2. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,
3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the Earth.
6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
7. Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obtain mercy.
8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
12. Rejoyce, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.



Christ teacheth his Disciples, but upon occasion of the Multitudes gathering about him to hear his Doctrine, to whom he hath respect therein, and for whose sake he at this time taught his Disciples: for it was upon the Multitudes following of him, and his own obedi-

tion of their deſire. that he now went up into a Mountain to teach; *And ſeeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain, &c.* So that theſe things which are here taught in this *Sermon*, though they belong to Diſciples, being proper *Laws* for Diſciples; yet they are alſo fit to be communicated to the world, that they may know the excellent *Paths* of the *Life* of Chriſt, and what is requiſite for them, and will be expected from them, if they undertake to become Diſciples to him. The world, ſeeing they are ſo earneſtly invited unto Chriſt, it ſeemeth very equal and fit that they ſhould know, both what Chriſt will do for them, and what alſo he will look for from them. All the *inſtructions* of Chriſt, of this nature, are fit to be held forth in the view of the world, though they can onely be received by his own.

There are indeed *mſteries of the Kingdom*, which are to be kept within the verge of the Kingdom: but the common principles, both of knowledge and praſtiſe, may be expoſed to the view of the world; nay indeed, it doth concern both the world to know them, and the life and Spirit of Chriſt, to make them known. It being the intent of God to give a proof of the ſpirit of man about theſe things (and to diſcover the excellent root and nature of that life which he ſoweth and bringeth forth in his, by its ability to bear and maintain ſuch fruit in truth and righteouſneſs, which the ſpirit of man cannot poſſibly do) it is requiſite that the motions and courſe of this life ſhould be opened to, and exacted from the world.

Now in this part of the Sermon, in theſe following Verſes (beginning at the third, and ending with the twelfth) Chriſt doth theſe three things.

1. He ſheweth what kind of perſons his Diſciples muſt be; *Poor in Spirit, Mourners, Meek, &c.* His life (with the exerciſes of it) in them, will ſoon produce this. He that is touched with the Spirit of Chriſt will ſoon be made,
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he that hath the nature of Christ planted in him, will soon become such an one.

2. He discovereth the true state of his Disciples in these respects; which is a state of blessedness: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the meek, &c.* Though these are very miserable to appearance, yet he who knoweth the true state of things, pronounceth them blessed; yea that which seemeth to be their misery, is their blessedness. Their life, their blessedness is in their state. The true state of life is in them, and the true path is trod by them.

3. He expressly evinceth the ground of their blessedness, which he doth not argue from their present state, which might seem somewhat harsh and invisible to them: their weak eye cannot discern the height of happiness, as it lieth hid in misery; therefore he declareth it upon such a ground as they could not but acknowledge, and the multitudes also could nor but own the same thing, namely from their end. *For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven, they shall be comforted, they shall inherit the earth, &c.* That such kind of persons, who should meet with this in the end, are indeed happy, who can deny or doubt?

These three things are to be taken notice of in every one of these clauses, in every one of these several branches, namely; First, the present state, temper, or qualification of Disciples, which they already are in some degree, and into which they are dayly more and more growing. They are *poor in spirit, mourners, meek, hungry and thirsting after righteousness, &c.* Secondly, their happiness or blessedness therein; they that are such are blessed; they in whom any of these tempers are sown in truth, Christ pronounceth blessed, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the meek, &c.* Thirdly, the ground of their happiness and blessedness, which consists in that which is annexed to this temper and state, in

that which this leads to, which is *the Kingdome*, the reign of that life in them, and of them in that life, which their spirits breath after, the sight and injoyment of God, and of that relation of theirs in God, which is sown in their nature. That Kingdome, that comfort, that inheritance of the earth, &c. which belongs to their nature, they shal be perfectly blessed in the perfect fruition of.

Before a particular entrance upon these things, three things may be observed in general.

1. That these are all effects flowing from the nature of the life of Christ, suitable to that state of weakness in which it is sown and springeth up. *Poorneſſe of spirit, mourning, meekneſſe, hungering and thirsting after righteousneſſe, mercifulneſſe, pureneſſe of heart, &c.* these flow from the seed of life in Disciples. They who are Disciples, who are emptied of themselves, and not yet filled with Christ cannot but be so. He cannot but be *poor in spirit*, who is destitute of the riches of God, and can count nothing else riches. He cannot but *mourn*, who wants all that he desireth to injoy, who is separated from all that he esteems and loves. He cannot but *hunger and thirst after righteousneſſe*, and that very vehemently, whose nature is strong of it self, and the whole strength of whole nature most naturally goeth forth towards it. He must needs be *meek*, the natural roughness of whose spirit is broken by the power of a new nature. He must needs be *mercifull, pure and peaceable*, whose very nature is all such. He must needs be *persecuted* by man, whose very temper, nature, and motions are abomination and death to mankind: For this life layeth all the excellency of man flat in the whole nature and in all the motions of it, and therefore cannot but be hated and persecuted by man. Our mortification or the mortification which we are acquainted with, is a piece of the excellency of man, or a fruit of the excellency of mans nature, art, or ingenuity; but the mortification

fication in the seed of God, by the spirit of Christ, is the death of all the excellency in man; and the world cannot bear to have all their light and glory put out by such a poor weak generation.

Man indeed may partly be somewhat of this (or at least, of that which he accounteth this) naturally. Man may naturally be of an humble, meek, merciful, peace-making temper and practise. Hee may also naturally mourn over the misery, desolation and corruption of the Creation, and may hunger and thirst after that which appears to him to be righteousness (and is so in its place,) for man doth not onely want the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of his nature and spirit, but of his own also, the supply whereof he may very earnestly desire according to the degree of his drinking in the sense of it. And man who is partly thus naturally, may become more so, by his ingenious and rational cherishing of this in himself. But yet, that which is thus formed, or which thus groweth, is not the thing at present nor cannot hold out at last. The exercises which God hath for his Children, wil wear out all the life and sweetness of nature, with all the power of reasoning which it can attain to; but that can never be rased out, which is naturally planted, and groweth up from the seed of an eternal nature. That cannot be deprived of life or blessednesse, which thus springeth and groweth up into life, and unto blessednesse.

And by the way, upon this occasion, this may be worth the taking notice of: That in the great ministration of the Gospel by Christ and his Apostles, God did both shew what the spirit of man could not do, with all the advantages which could be afforded him, and what his own spirit could do upon man, against all the disadvantages it could meet with there. (The same God which of old made a trial of the spirit of man, in that people of

the *Jews* under the Law, did also make a fresh proof of the spirit of man, in the Christian Church, under the Gospel.)

Man though brought never so neer, could not come to Christ; though assisted never so much, could not walk with Christ; with all the incitations and gifts bestowed upon him, could not serve Christ; with all the warnings, motives and assistances, could not stay or abide with Christ; but do God what he wil, with him, or for him, let him kindle never so many fears on the one hand or hopes on the other, quickening each by a lively taste and assured expectation of each, yet the spirit of man (one time or other) falls back, the temper, the nature of his heart sooner or later, will draw him from Christ.

Again, The Spirit of God can take man at his greatest distance, in the midst of his greatest darkness and enmity against him, from under the greatest contrary power; can change him, can cause him to walk naturally with him and his Christ, and can keep him with him, notwithstanding all allurements and force that can be used to the contrary. Neither doth he this by main strength, but by a secret nature and instinct, whereby he so toucheth their spirits, that they cannot be drawn or depart from him. This is the first thing to be observed in general: That all these tempers, all these motions, all these operations, are sweet fruits and effects of the life of Christ in the Seed of Christ.

2. That there is a blessedness in all these tempers: a blessedness attends the sowing, growth, motions, operations and exercises of all these Seeds. This miserable Seed (in view) groweth up to blessedness, all along, in the midst of its appearing misery.

3. That this blessedness is not yet visible, but shal in the end be discovered. Its nature lieth in what it is, in its substance, not in its discovery or manifestation either to its self or others. The nature of its blessedness is in it self

self, but the discovery or sight of it ariseth from its state : from the Kingdom which shall be opened in it, and given to it, from its portion of comfort in the Lord, from its inheriting of his Earth, from its sight and enjoyment of him and of his righteousness : *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven ; Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ; Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, &c.* They are now in a woful, in a miserable, in a dejected, distressed condition ; without the Kingdom, without comfort, without the sight and enjoyment of God ; nay not onely without Heaven, but without Earth too : but they shal have all at last, they shal have the Kingdom, they shal have comfort, they shal have God and Earth and all. They are now low : low in themselves, low in their own state, low in compare with man. The spirit of man is rich, but they are poor : The spirit of man can find comfort, but they are comfortless : The spirit of man can make shift in the world and in the several strains of Religion there, and can rejoice every where, but they no where : The spirit of man can enjoy and bless God in every thing, but they can nothing but mourn for the want of him. But for all this, The time is a coming wherein the spirit of man shal be baffled, lying down in misery and sorrow, and they shal receive the Kingdom, the Life, the Comfort, God, Heaven Earth, All. To come now to the Particulars.

Vers. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

THere is a twofold poverty of spirit : *A poverty of the natural spirit, and a poverty of the new life or renewed spirit.*

The poverty of the natural spirit is, when the natural man is stripped of all his riches and excellencies, even to his
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own view : when he sees none of that worth which he formerly beheld, or imagined to be in himself, but finds himself really destitute of it, then his spirit sinks, fails, and becomes poor. This overtury of the natural spirit may flow from and be a testimony unto the poverty of the new life, but it is not it. There can hardly bee any man throughly broken in his natural spirit but by the seed of life, and the exercises on it, they break it to purpose. *The spirit of a man may bear his infirmities*; it may pass through all the weaknesses and exercises of man, and yet hold up its head; *but a wounded spirit* (which is usually found among the seed, whom the sharp exercises of God do so constantly follow) *who can bear?*

The poverty of the life or renewed spirit, is when the spirit of the new man sinks upon his evident and sensible being stripped of all his spiritual riches, excellency and glory. The life is usually in very low conditions; God bringeth forth the members in this world, as he did the head, not to reign here, but to be broken and humbled. And he that can espy them out shall most commonly find them poor, afflicted, destitute, liable to all manner of wants and miseries both within and without, the thorow knowledge and constant sense and experience whereof may well make them poor in spirit. The nature of their life, its weak state and condition in this world, its continued exercises on every hand, and its end in the bitterness of death may well begin and perfect a compleat poverty of spirit.

Look upon *Christ*, or the man in whom is the nature seed or life of Christ, thus you shall find him. He hath no life, no strength in himself, but all upon Alms. Hee hath not one bit of bread for one moment, but as it is freely given in to him, which is not for any continuance neither, but just for the present necessity. Hee hath no cloaths (being stripped every night) no hole to hide his

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his head in. *The Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the ayre Nests*, but this life is not thus provided for. Nothing can he do, nothing can he suffer, nothing can he resist, nothing can he obtain, but as it is given in to him. (There is no life more excellent, more perfect in it self, *i. e.* of a more perfect kind, and yet no life more desolate, more destitute, more indigent in its present state) great are his enemies, but he hath no power of preservation in himself, nor can he so much as beg preservation from him who is able to secure him, but as another breaths and stirs up this motion of life in him. Thus he is at best, yet it is very pleasant with him, while his life is daily fed and nourished by that Fountain from which it sprung. Though he hath nothing to live upon but his faith, yet he lives better, and is more sweetly satisfied by his faith, then he who hath the best provisions, advantages, helps & assistances of sense. But oh how poor, how naked, how empty, how miserable is he, when these influences are stopped; his life calling for so much for the maintenance of it, and he having nothing at all to supply it with, his pain must needs be very great. And the quick and pure nature of his life, must needs make him very sensible of his misery. Christ when he feeleth this, crieth out *I am a worm and no man*, I once seemed to have wisdom beyond the rate of man, but alas now I have none of the life of a man in me. And *Agur*, who was broken by the exercises of this life, cried out also, *I am more brutish then any man, and have not the understanding of a man*. Proud, unbroken man will be boasting that he hath the life of God in him, the great and mighty life of God: God shal be no more then he is, nor he wil be no lesse then God is. But poor broken *Christ*, and his poor broken *seed*, cannot so much as acknowledg in themselves the life of man, so much as the ordinary strength wisdom, or excellency of man, but *I am a worm and no man*, saith

saith *Christ*, and *I am more brutish then any man*, saith every broken Saint. Though in the breathing of life into them, and in the growth of it in them, they are far more excellent; yet in the breaking of that life, and of all the excellencies of man in them with it, they are laid far below man. When all the glory of man, yea and of their own life too, is crucified in them, alas how far do they fall beneath man! They are indeed made *worms*, and *no men*, and they are indeed *more brutish then any man*. They do not complement or use empty expressions about their own poverty, weakness, and misery, but they speak what they feel, though not all that they feel. The death of *Christ* is a true death; It is a true thing that dieth, and it is a true death which it dieth: and such is all the pain, shame, sense and misery of it. It is not in *Christ* any corrupt thing that dieth, but pure spirit, and pure flesh. It is a spotless sacrifice of his own life, of his own nature, and of the life and nature of man in it, which he offers up to God *through the Eternal Spirit*. So that there is a two-fold brokenness and poverty which the seed of *Christ* are sensible of.

1. There is a Brokenness and Poverty in respect of all the life and excellencies of man: All the life of man is broken in them, all the excellency of man is broken to them, and they are made poor in that respect. Much of this they find in their first conversion; All their own wisdom, all their own eye-sight, all their own strength is an impediment unto them, and they are not thoroughly converted till that be broken. But for all its being broken, it riseth up again, and liveth in their converted estate, wherein they have as it were a new life, and sanctified use of all that was lost and thrown away before their conversion. Their understanding, their wisdom, yea all their natural parts, abilities, endowments, gifts, and qualifications, which were an hindrance before, are now useful when they are converted.

2. There is also a brokenness of all the excellency of their

their new life, or of the whole work of renovation in them. (This is very strange Doctrine to the whole house of fleshly Israel, but he which knoweth, testifieth that the Lord will be so just to his Son Christ, as not to let that life live any where else, which he hath slain in him : but where ever it is found, it must be made a sacrifice by the same Eternal Spirit.) The enemy cometh forth against it, fighteth against it, leadeth it into captivity and death, and it also perureth and vanissheth. This seed dieth in every piece of earth, where ever it is sown, throughout the whole Creation of God. *Christ* could not have lived, unless he had died : Nor can the Life or Spirit of the Seed of Christ truly live in any, unless it first die. The same Life in the seed must fill up the measure of the sufferings and death of Christ, by which sufferings and death, the salvation of man (the life and death of man being comprehended in it, and carried along with it) is begun and perfected.

Yet for all this, *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* This blessedness referreth to their first state of poverty, but more fully and principally to their second. Being then more poor in spirit, more drenched into poverty (poor even in that respect, wherein in their first state they were rich) they are become more blessed. If they that are poor are blessed because of this their poverty, then they that are most poor in this kind, are most blessed. The foundation of their blessedness is laid in their poverty, and therefore the perfection of their blessedness must needs arise out of the accomplishment and perfection of their poverty. Blessed is he who is stripped of all the excellency of this world, that he may receive the poor weak despised nature and life of Christ : but far more blessed is he, who is stripped of this also. O wondrous happy is *Christ in his death*, though very precious and rare is that eye which can discern so much as his death, much less the happiness of it ! Yet that thing which is the death of Christ, is more

easily seen, viz. as it appeareth clothed in its veil, but it is not seen or known to be the death of Christ, as his life was not formerly in the day and season of it.

For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Herein lyeth their blessedness (The rich Kingdom of Heaven, (wherein all the glories of God are unvailed and dispensed) is prepared for these poor. The most perfect riches are intended for these perfectly poor ones. The Kingdom of heaven (wherein are all the treasures of God) is intended for these, nay doth of right belong to these; it is theirs; *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* The right to this large rich inheritance, is written in their nature, in their state and condition, in their very poverty; therefore they without doubt are blessed. He is not blessed who appears great in a vain shew, but he who is great in truth: Not he who hath a present shadow of life, but he who hath an eternal seed of life is blessed. He is not rich who abounds with trash, but he who hath the true substance hid within his meanness, lowness, and poverty.

It will be easily granted, that he is blessed who shall go to Heaven. O happy is his lot to whom heaven appertains, let him be accounted what he will here, or let his condition be what it will here; Heaven will make amends for all. Why to these doth heaven belong: nay, they shall not only be in heaven, to see all the glory and riches there, but they shall reigne in heaven, They shall have the perfect command and enjoyment of all there. They shall be there in their own Kingdom, having the perfect Use, Lordship, and Service of every thing there. When he cometh to whom this Kingdom belongeth, they shall come with him, and be opened in him, and he in them, and their right shall be as manifest as his: and therefore according to judgement and righteousness, must they inherit and possess the Kingdom with him. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

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VERSE 4. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

THis world is a Map or Landskip of contrary appearances, wherein things appear far different from what they are. Things that are blessed appear miserable, and things that are miserable appear blessed. All the several strains of true blessednesse, appear under so many severall Vails of seeming misery, and all the several strains of misery and death, appear in garments of life and blessedness. That which is rich appears poor, and that which is poor appears rich. That which hath the seed of joy in it cometh forth in garments of Sack-cloth, weeping bitterly, but finding no comfort, and that which hath the seed of sorrow, and no ground of comfort, commeth on the stage full of joy and rejoycing, abounding with all manner of consolation.

Blessed are they that mourn.

True life in its broken estate, in its separation from its Fountain, as it hath the true and real ground of mourning in it, so its temper and posture is mournful. Its course in this world is not like that of the world, *viz.* a seeking and injoying the sweetnesse of it; but a mourning under what it is, and after what it wants. This is commonly the condition of it.

First, it is for the most part in a very low estate. The breath of life breaths faintly, the Streams of life run low here. It is not it self while it is here in this world. It cannot be it self, it cannot injoy it self, it cannot move like it self in any thing; Life commeth not forth into this world to live, but to act a painful part and die.

Secondly, it wants the presence and injoyment of its Fountain. It is not onely in the state of a poor weak child in it self, but it wants the company of its Parents also. It

is as it were cut off from its Original. It is like a tender sprig planted in an unnatural soil, without the Communication of its own sap, indeed it hath a juyce and a sap, whereby it is supplied with such and such moisture and nourishment, to such kind of motions and ends whereunto it is guided; but it hath not that sap which its nature desireth, and which is requisite, to the maintenance of that life which it would most naturally shoot up in, if it were but proportionably fed.

Thirdly, it is continually under exercises of one kind or other. This poor weak life, this tender innocent nature, is continually exercised, tried, and pained one way or other: yea sometimes it is under that dreadful exercise of captivity to the will and power of its utter enemies. As it was not intended for ease or rest here, so little ease or rest is afforded it. It is alwaies about the work for which it was thus formed and brought forth, which is to breath out it self and die, to give an experiment of it self and pass away, to testifie to the truth in Sack-cloth, and seal its testimony with its blood.

Now how can it but be mourning in this condition? And its mourning must needs be very bitter, for it hath no effectual comforter. At best it can have but some that may assay to comfort it, but none that can avail, which is implied in that clause, *they shal be comforted*; it is not yet the season of comfort: he who alone can comfort them, is not yet come, and none can speak his voice but he, nor wil he administer comfort but in the season of it.

Observ. The State of the Seed of Christ is mournful and comfortles. They are called in the Old-Testament mourners in Zion; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heavynesse, II. 61. 3. And Christ tels his Disciples, who were called to joy and rejoycing, and whose dispensation was such a lively and joyful

joyful dispensation, that they also must spend their time in grief and tears, leaving the present portion of joy to the world, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoyce, and ye shall be sorrowfull, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy,* John 16. 20. Their sorrow shal be removed, they shal be comforted hereafter, but they cannot be comforted at present.

The reason whereof is, because the foundation of their mourning, is in respect of that which cannot be altered. It is the present weak frame of their life, their present separation from the Fountain, their present captivity under their enemies, which occasion and feed it, all which must have their course and cannot be otherwise. Perhaps the extream deadnes and faintnes of their spirits may sometimes be releevd by consideration of the excellent wil of God in all this, and the excellent wisdom of God which wil work good out of all this; but notwithstanding that, they cannot but mourn at present under it, and truly comforted they cannot be, until this counsel of God be finished and their state changed.

But they shal bee comforted. What means that? Why much the same with the former. It intends such a change, as shall yeeld full and lasting consolation. They shal have the Kingdome, they shal have perfect life and liberty in themselves, perfectly injoying perfect life and liberty in God. They shal be as strong in themselves, as full of God, and as far from the reach of enemies as their hearts can desire. As they have been afflicted to purpose, broken to purpose, made mourners to purpose, so they shal be comforted to purpose. What ever can dis-comfort them shal be removed, and what ever can revive and refresh them shal be administred to the fullnesse of perfection: *They shal be comforted.* It is a vast and comprehensive expression, including all that can conduce to make up a full and compleat consolation; there can no defect, no weaknesse,

ness, no want remain, where there is true and full comfort.

VERSE 5. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.*

MAN is naturally of a rough harsh spirit, and though there may be found some natural meekness in his constitution and temperament, yet it is very weak and easily overcome. But he who is new made, and thoroughly broken by the exercises of the new life in him, he is become very meek, he is made meek indeed. The new seed changeth him, and the exercises which attend the seed, heighten the change making him still more and more calm and gentle. This meekness is of an eternal nature (it is unchangeable meekness) it is meekness of the nature of Christ, it hath the stamp of Christs spirit upon it, and however violences and distempers may drive it inward (especially where it is weak) yet nothing can raze it out of the spirit.

Now Christ saith these are *blessed*, in their present estate they appear furthest from blessedness. They are *like Sheep among Wolves*. Their meekness depriveth them both of what they might be and enjoy, it maketh them unable to shift for themselves, or to withstand the violence and oppression of others: They would not be so hunched up and down, and so universally abused, were they not so meek. The mild nature of the Lamb or Sheep encourageth the Wolf to prey upon it, and unsitteth it for any resistance. Look up and down the world, you shall behold none to suffer more then the meek, then the innocent and silent. He that resisteth not evil (as Christ commands his Disciples, his Sheep, his Lambs) shall have loads enough thereof laid upon his back. This disposition in them makes them the common mark of injury

jury and violence. They are fitted to provoke it, fitted to receive it, fitted to bear it, here men may vent it freely without fear of having it retorted upon them. Surely, man can never judge this temper, or the condition that attends it blessed; yet Christ saith these are blessed, and upon such a ground as man wil acknowledge.

For they shall inherit the Earth.

The Earth is the Lords and the fulness thereof, and he will dispose of it to *the meek*. Not the hot stirring spirits, who bustle for the world, shall have it: but the week, who are thrust up and down from corner to corner, and hardly suffered to remain any where quietly in it. This earth, which they seem most deprived of, they only shall have and enjoy. — When the Lord hath made it worth the having, then none shall have it but they.

They shall inherit the Earth. The Earth is the Lords: These are the children of the Lord, and they shall inherit his Earth. When the Lord taketh it into his own possession and enjoyment, they shall succeed him in the possession and enjoyment of it. It is their right, and shall descend unto them by right, by Inheritance. It is the Lords Right, and by the Lord shall descend to them as their right. They cannot yet have it, for the Lord hath it not yet: but when the Lord hath it, it shall fairly descend to them. This accursed Earth they shall never have; but when it is taken into the hands of the Lord, and blessed by the Lord then it shall be theirs, then it shall be inherited by the children of blessing. Then *Abraham and all his Seed shall dwell therein for ever*. Then the children of the promise shall live for ever in the Land of promise. So that this is no less than *eternal life*, which is here promised to the meek. It is not Heaven or Earth, wherein glory or excellencie lieth, but in the Light and Life of God which can empty or fill either. As the Earth is to pass away, so are the Heavens

too: and as the Heavens are to remain, so is the Earth also: *The Earth abideth for ever*, saith the Psalmist. Nor is this any diminution of happiness, for Gods Earth fitted by himself for his Seed, filled with his own fulness, is beyond any Heaven that the heart of man can imagine. When the Children of God come once to know the true nature of him who is their life, they will not care where they are with him, whether in Heaven or earth: They will not value either Heaven or earth at all, but him alone: in either or both. But this is not to be understood of this earth as it now is, or as it is now possessed or enjoyed (it is now indeed fit for that spirit which doth possess and enjoy it, and that spirit alone is fit for it) but as it shal be darkened with the glory of Heaven, with the life, presence, Majesty, and fulness of God himself, whereby it shal become an inheritance worthy of his seed, wherein his seed shal appear blessed & fully recompenced for all the misery which their meeknesse (with the rest of his pure nature and motions of his holy spirit) hath exposed them to. So that very sweetly and aptly is this spoken to the meek, and may be a cordial to them in the midst of al their miseries in the earth and thrustings out of the earth, to think that one day they shal inherit it.

VERSE 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shal be filled.*

Righteousnesse is the integrity of any nature in its state and motions: It is the onely desirable thing in every state, in every motion. *Being substance, satisfaction, and enjoyment;* which are the natural desire of every thing, yet are onely desirable, and onely naturally desired, according to righteousness. It is a righteous being, a righteous subsistence, a righteous satisfaction and enjoyment, which the

the nature of every thing longeth for; every thing was formed by a righteous principle, which formed in it a righteous nature, by a righteous rule, to live in, and move towards righteousness; so that righteousness is the proper Element of every thing, its spring, its beginning, the law of its course, its end. It is the remote image of God in the creature, the more especial image of God in man, the most especial image of God in Christ.

Righteousness here denoteth the highest Righteousness, the righteousness of the nature of Christ, for that onely is the truth, that is the righteousness of the true, full, lasting kind, and onely truly comprehends and can bring forth the righteousness of man, and of the creature. All righteousness dieth, let down out of Christ (thus did *Adam's*, though of a very fine pure make) and all righteousness liveth again, taken up into Christ. The most substantial thing in man (and in the creature) is vain; the meanest thing taken into Christ is substantial; all other righteousness is corrupt in its own kind, and so is not righteousness; besides the shortness of its own nature, whereby at best it can be but a shadow, not the thing it self, not true righteousness, but onely a true representation of righteousness. But this righteousness is true in it self, it is the thing, not the name or shadow, and all other righteousness in this is true also. Every thing in the Kingdom, every thing in Christ, every thing in God tastes of the nature, vertue, life, and power of the Kingdome, of Christ, and of God.

Hungring and thirsting, is the natural and vehement desire of this righteousness, which the soul in whom the seed of it is, feeleth the need of, as of its food. This nature, this life hath a Stomack which hungereth and thirsteth after this righteousness, as after its meat and drink. That which feedeth the true life of man, is righteousness according to the nature of man (for our common food, is

but the food of the bestial nature not of the man) and that which feeds the true life of Christ, is righteousness according to the nature of Christ. He therefore that hath a spice of this seed in him (the seed of truth, the seed of righteousness, the true nature of Christ in the seed) O how he hungrerh & thirsterh for the satisfaction of this life, for the injoyment of this life, for the receiving in, and bringing forth of this life, for the fulness of it in the seed, in the growth, and in the harvest; other men long for the happiness or satisfaction of their own corrupt nature (those whose longings are purest, are but for the righteousness of man) but he longs for the full growth, receipt, and injoyment of the righteousness which is suitable to his nature, even the pure and perfect righteousness of Christ, or the eternal everlasting righteousness of the nature of God in Christ.

This same *hungering and thirsting*, is to sense, the most miserable thing that can be. What can be worse then extremity of want of that which is necessary even to life it self, with the perfect sense of it; it is both miserable in it self, and also eateth out the delight of every thing else; for can any thing be pleasant to him who is in extremity of hunger and thirst, while that which he hungers and thirsts after is withheld from him; it is very painful in its own nature, besides the great pain, sorrow, and anguish which it causeth, yea it imbittereth every thing, be it otherwise never so sweet. Do you know the pain of the hungry and thirsting of this common nature? do you know the languishing and fainting in it, the panting of the spirit, the very failing of all the powers of nature, which alwaies attend it when it is vehement? Alas, it is nothing to this! as this hunger and thirst is larger, from a larger spirit, of a larger kind and nature, after far larger things then mans spirit is capable of, so is the pain hereof much greater: These pantings, these faintings, these sinkings of spirit are unexpressible. Hear what David saith, *As the Hart* (or

(or *Hind*) *panteth after the Water-brooks*, so *panteth my soul after thee O God*. David did not know how to set out the vehemency and pain of his spirit, and therefore is faine to draw a dark shadow of it, to resemble it by a Picture, which can expresse onely the similitude not the substance of it. It is like such a thing, such a thing doth shadow it, doth after a kind signifie it, but cannot hold out or expresse the nature of it.

But what saith *Christ* concerning these? why these saith he are *blessed*. This extreemly miserable state is full of blessednesse, hath the seed of blessednesse in it. These which are so destitute, so full of pain and misery both to their own sense, and to the eye and judgement of the world, these are the blessed ones in my eye saith *Christ*: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness*.

And he adds such a ground of this his judgement, as no sense, no experience, no apprehension, no reason can contradict, which is from their future state, which this present state leadeth to, and fitteth them for; *for they shall be filled*. Their satisfaction with righteousness shall be compleat; they shall have as much of that which they so long for, as their vessels can hold, let them open their mouths and hearts never so wide, they shall be fully answered. They shall eat of the bread of life, they shall drink of the Fountain of righteousness unto satiety. As their desires are from the most excellent nature, most pure, strong, and perfect in that nature, and after the most compleat and perfect thing, so they shall meet with the fullest, the compleatest, the most perfect union, injoyment, and satisfaction. There shall not the least cranny of their nature, or the least breath that ever came from their spirits, want the full supply of that which it went forth after, or can desire. All the desires of the heart of man are vanity, and shall end in vanity (Man was made for a peece of vanity in his whole nature and motions, in this state, which

shall come to nothing :) But all the desires of this seed, are of the nature of this seed, viz. substantial, and shall meet with substance. All the desires of man, even after God, after Christ, after righteousness, shall burn and perish with him (for they are not the truth, nor do they come from the truth, nor can they reach to the truth;) but all the desires of this spirit shall live with the spirit of God in rest, and satisfaction for ever.

VERSE 7. *Blessed are the mercifull, for they shall obtain mercy.*

BOWELS were made for the miserable, and they are stirred up by the sense and experience of misery. He that knoweth what it is to want, knoweth how to pity those that are in want. He who knoweth what it is to be miserable in every kind, knoweth how to pity those that are in misery in any kind.

Mercy hath its foundation in nature, but its growth from sense and experience. Now as Christ, so his seed have both the largest bowels naturally, and also the greatest sense and experience of misery. Their mercy is the only true mercy, it is mercy of the right nature and stamp, of the lasting kind (the mercy of man is weak at best, and may easily be worn out, theirs cannot :) They also have the onely true and full taste and sence of misery (which man and the Creature have but a dul smatch of, and that onely in their own kind too) therefore they are the onely merciful ones.

Now who knoweth what a miserable thing it is to be mercifull? It is a grievous, smarting, painfull thing to receive in and bear the sense of every ones misery. He onely can enjoy himself, in this state of things, who is cruel: He is very full of misery, who continually drinketh in, and tasteth the calamity both of the old and new creation,

ation. While there is so much misery every where, how can he be any way happy who is continually filled with the sense of it?

And yet Christ saith, *blessed are the mercifull*, these are his blessed ones, these are the blessed ones in his eye. This state of misery and paining under the burthens of others, is better then any enjoyment of life and content in ones self, which is yet to be had.

For they shall obtain mercy.

Mercy in its extent, mercy in its fulnesse denotes perfect redemption out of this state of misery, the perfect removal of all evil, of all sorrow, of all death, and the perfect supply of all good, of all joy, of all life. The giving of Christ, and of all the life and salvation which Christ conveyeth and worketh up to, is from and through mercy, and the obtaining of receiving of mercy is the receiving the fulnesse and perfection of all that. As the first coming or visitation by Christ was from mercy, through mercy, and with mercy (*through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us;*) so the perfecting of it will bee but the further venting of mercy. Gods filling of Christ and all his Saints with perfect life and blessednesse, will be but the full conquest of his mercy over their misery.

Now this merciful nature in them, with the operations thereof, are but a discovery who those are for whom the treasures of Gods mercy are reserved. God hath riches of mercy, a vast stock of mercy, which he wil empty on them whom he hath fitted for it. Now who are these *Vessels of mercy*, whom the Lord will thus fill? why, they are the mercifull, those that are seized upon by mercy, those that are changed by mercy, those that are made miserable by wants and bowels; by wants in themselves, and by bowels towards the wants of others; have in themselves a taste of that where with they shall be filled and satisfied: They
who

who from the nature of Christ, have learned and practised to fulfill the law of Christ, which is *to bear every burthen*, shall be eased of all their bonds, troubles, and burthens in the day of refreshment. They who know how to dispence mercy in this day, shall abound with the receipt of mercy in the day of the Lord: *Blessed are the mercifull, for they shall obtain mercy.*

VERSE. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

THE heart is the Fountain of life to the natural man, to the corrupt man, and to the renewed or new man; but the new man hath not the old heart for the fountain of his life, but that is taken away, and he hath a new heart given him, which is the Spring or Fountain of his new life.

This life is pure, and therefore the heart must needs be much more pure (or stronger in purity) where the seat of it is, and it thrusteth out the corrupt heart wholly (though not at first, or all at once, but by degrees) or if you will, it purifieth the natural heart from the guilt and corruption which it hath contracted; the blood of Christ, the blood of this life, the blood of the spiritual man, cleanseth and purifieth the natural man. Christ dying in nature, nature dieth with Christ, that life which it had from him dieth with him; which death wasteth all the corruption of it, so that when it riseth again it riseth pure. This is the misery of the world, they die not the death of Christ; therefore in the resurrection they shall not know the life of Christ, but their corruption shall arise with them. All the afflictions, miseries, deaths, &c. which can befall the spirit of man, cannot purifie the spirit of man, even as all the afflictions, miseries, deaths, &c. which can befall the spirit of the seed, cannot defile their spirit.

The Pure in heart, they whose hearts are cleansed, are not fit for this unclean world; therefore their grief, misery and vexation from it will be great. The court, the waies, the impurity of the world, even in its greatest holiness, and righteousness, will vex every pure and righteous soul. Those that are pure in heart, are continually afflicted with the clogs of impurity, both in the world, and about themselves, which makes them ever crying out, *Oh wretched man, who shall deliver me from this wretched world without, and this wretched nature or spirit within.*

Yet Christ pronounceth them blessed, *Blessed are the pure in heart*, this is a blessed state, this truly leads to blessedness. It is prepared for life, and it brings forth seed continually unto life. A pure heart is fit onely for the presence and injoyment of God, fit onely to be with, and to injoy, and be injoyed of God. God, and all the fruits of the God-head are fit onely for a pure Palate; and all the fruits of a pure heart, are fit onely for the Palate of God.

For they shall see God, A pure heart causeth a single and pure eye, which alone can see God. God alone shall be represented to that eye, and that eye alone can discern the representation of him, so that they and onely they shall see him, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Indeed a kind of sight every eye shal have, but a pure, a perfect, a thorow sight into his nature, none shall have but those in whom his own pure and holy eye groweth up from the seed of his own nature, and that sight which they have shall neither be pleasing nor profitable, but such as they would far rather be without, and would give any thing to be rid of; whereas it will be perfect pleasure and content to the pure. The sight of God will be death to every unclean eye, to every unclean heart; but life to the pure eye, to the pure heart. The impure so far as they shall see into the nature, life, and operations of God, they will see their own death and misery written in it. The pure will

see there the fountain, the nourishment, the perfection of their own purity, the head, the spring, the center of their own nature, which can be no less then perfect life and happiness to them.

The Eye is the most capacious sense, which requires most satisfaction. To *see God*, implieth a great excellency and ability in the eye, which he who is able to do, hath a great strength of life in him; and it implieth also perfect blessedness which consisteth in the sight of God. Men commonly define happiness to be the sight of God, the *beatifical Vision* they usually call it. Indeed the true, the full sight of God, can be no less then perfect blessedness, and the Lord can give no less then the perfect view of himself, to the perfectly pure in heart, therefore they must needs be blessed. Or thus,

Seeing of God, denotes two things; it denotes a strength of life within (a perfect life within) and the perfect satisfaction of that life from without. Life now is weak within; it cannot desire much of God, it cannot receive much from God: the eye is so weak, that it cannot see the things of God, were they held forth never so nakedly before it, nay the brightness of God would dazle and disturb, if not extinguish the sight; wherefore God is fain to vail and cloud whatever he opens of himself unto us. And yet this weak eye, this weak life is very little satisfied; it is scanty of those sights and enjoyments of God, which it could receive in. But in the season of the breathing forth of blessedness, the weak eye shall be made strong to see God, to see all that is in God (for otherwise it doth not see him; unless it see whole God, it doth not see God) and the faint heart shall bee filled and satisfied with all that is in God; it shall recieve all that the eye sees. What we see now, is at a distance from us, but then what we see shall be in us, we shall have all in us, and receive all into us, and let all out of us. But of this enough.

VERS 9. *Blessed are the Peace-makers ; for they shall be called the Children of God.*

GOD is the God of Peace, Christ is the Prince of Peace, that which God gives, that which Christ begets, is a spirit of Peace, and this is the fruit which he expects to reap in all spiritual motions, Peace: the very nature of the life of Christ is Peace, and the great design of the spirit of Christ is to make Peace; it is the proud spirit of *Satan* which causeth contention, the sweet, meek, lowly spirit of Christ worketh Peace.

Now as God soweth the seed of Peace in his alone, so in them alone it liveth, groweth, and acteth. None can truly desire peace, none can truly move after Peace, but they who have the seed of Peace in them. The naturally peaceable temper of man (which is but a shadow) may easily be changed and driven from this design; but this nature, this spirit, can never leave off making peace, until it hath perfectly accomplished it.

As there is no Peace to the wicked, saith my God: So there is no Peace in the wicked (although there may seem to be a spirit of peace within them, as well as there doth seem peace outwardly to be unto them) but there is a spirit of division, a root of enmity, at the bottome of all their sweetness and union; so that peace-making is a strange thing to the wicked, or to the spirit of man which in its present constitution is wicked. That which he looketh upon in himself as Peace, is not Peace; that which hee looketh upon from himself to be Peace-making, is not Peace-making; the way to make true peace in any kind, man hath not known; the foundations of Peace which man can lay, are of a very frail nature, and may easily be rased; they are but according to his state and light, which comprehends not the truth in any kind, and therefore can

by no means bring it forth. How can hee truly make Peace, who cannot lay any one true Foundation of Peace.

But there is a spirit, there is a seed, there is a nature, there is a life which knoweth the true kind of peace, and the true way to peace; and is continually making use of this skil within the verge of its own nature, and also darting forth some beams of it in the world, occasioning, furthering, sweetning, heightning (as much as may be) that peace among mankind (as also among the children of God in their severall dispensations) which their common nature is capable of.

Now the peaceable and Peace-making spirit meeteth with the hardest measure in this boisterous and contentious world. He is onely acceptable here, who is skilfull in dividing and in making advantages by division (though man thinketh otherwise, hee thinks he loves peace and peace-making.) But he who is a true Peace-maker, shall find as much real opposition and misery from the world, as it can follow him with (*they hated me for my good will*, said Christ.) The world is not acquainted with the nature and way of their peace, nor doth it at all suit the present bitter selfish spirit of the world; and therefore the world cannot but hate and persecute both it and them for it. Besides a peaceable temper of spirit is a great temptation to provoke the world to molest and persecute it, for there they may make their assaults with most ease, safety, and advantage.

Yet Christ saith, that these are blessed, *Blessed are the Peace-makers*; they are of a blessed nature of an excellent frame, about a blessed work which leads to, and will end in blessedness.

For they shall be called the Children of God.

Greater honour or dignity there cannot be, then to be a child of God; right to all life and blessednesse is wrapped

ped up in it. It includes in it a natural love and care from God. The child hath the same nature, the same life with the Parent; and it is the desire and care of the Parent to exalt him as high, if not beyond himself. Why this the *Peace-makers* are now (they are *the Children of God*) and this they shall be known to be one day; when they are opened, and their nature made appear, they shall plainly appear *the off-spring of God*, they shall be acknowledged and called *his Children*: his nature in them shall evidence and make it universally confessed that they are his seed. Now they may be called the sons of *Belial*, the Children of the Devil, the great disturbers of the Peace of the world, the turners of all things upside down, as *Christ and his seed*, have been esteemed by the world in all ages; but when the season of the owning of truth and of the dispensation of blessedness comes, they shall be known what they are. Then they shall be known to be those who had the true life of God in them, and the nearest relation unto God, both which give them a natural right to all that is in him.

VERSE 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

There is a righteous nature in the new life, and in all the motions of it, which is as a light to discover the death and unrighteousness of all that, which the world calleth life and righteousness. This acknowledgement of God, this worship of God (which they hold forth and practise, or at least mourn after) shews all the knowledge and worship of the world to be a lie. This love and justice which they exercise towards Man-kind, shews that which the world calls so, to be but dissimulation, onely a counterfeite of the thing, not the thing in truth.

This maketh the world to persecute them; they can-

not indure this life, they cannot indure this righteousness, they hate them that preteud to it and practise it. Alas, how can it be otherwise? all their excellency, all their glory lieth in their own religion, in their own righteousness, and how can they possibly indure that light which discovereth it to bee a lie? if their religion were true, they would scorn to persecute, they could not persecute: they would need no such defence, the nature of their Religion would not suffer them to make use of any such defence, but being but worldly, the best defence and security it hath, is by worldly weapons.

And as this *nature, life, religion or righteousness*, is most contrary to the world, so the greatest *persecution* doth still arise because of it. No sort of worldly men persecute any kind of wickedness, so much as they do the true righteousness. The worldly religious man is more zealous against that which is the truth indeed, and against those which are the true professors and holders forth of it, then against any sort of evill or evill persons. *The Jews*, who had *the law and the Prophets*, the onely light, the onely hope, the onely worship, who were *the onely people of God in the World*; yet in the height of their zeal for righteousness and against sin and wickednesse, let *Barabbas* escape readily, that they might hunt more freely after the precious blood of Christ. And thou who so suddenly and sharply judgest them because of this (as worthy of the wrath and severity of God) little observest how thou doest the same things thy self. O how cruel & unrighteous is the purest zeal of man against the truth of God, against the holy nature, life, and righteousness of Christ.

Now how miserable must these needs be who are enforced to live in the world, and whom the world thus prosecutes! Difference in opinion is seldome very tollerable: but what is difference in natures? When such a nature and practises appear, as condemn the most religious, the

the most righteous, the most strict men; not onely in that which they will acknowledge to be their vanity and corruption (and which they hope to be delivered from) but in the very root of their life, of their religion, of their purest righteousness and hopes? When Christ appeareth in any of his seed, there is a signature of his Kingly spirit upon him, which the religious and righteous spirit of man cannot but desire to kill, that the inheritance may be his. And how do you think religious man, or worldly man (for they are both the same thing before God) will look upon those who stand between him and heaven, whose nature, whose principles, whose life, whose motions dash all his hopes, discovering the emptiness and shallowness of the very nature of all his life and righteousness: Surely, if the envy, zeal, indignation, and cruelty of man, here shewed by Religion, can introduce misery, these are sure to feel it, further then they are covered by the art and skil of the Lord from the world, or then the world is blinded from discerning them.

Yet these are blessed saith Christ, *blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake.* Not the great, glorious, rich, religious persecutor, who with a great shew of zeal for God, piety and devotion towards him, hunts this truly righteous one, as prophane and wicked (as the next verse shews) but the poor persecuted one is blessed in Christs account, and in the ballance of his judgement. And this is the reason that Christ giveth of his verdict, because the Kingdom of blessedness is his; *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* That Kingdome which is the reward of righteousness belongeth to these persons, these are the truly righteous ones, these have that righteousness, and exercise that righteousness, to which the Kingdom is promised.

It is not every one whom the world persecutes, that is blessed (corrupt man may come forth with such a wickedness)

nesse, as the world by its light may truly discern to be so and may justly prosecute it) but it is those in whom the righteousness, in whom the life of Christ is, who are persecuted by the world, because of that life, because of that righteousness whom Christ pronounceth blessed.

For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

There is a Kingdome of Heaven, much talked of, and much hoped for by all sorts. Man is not satisfied with this present vain state, but presseth towards a Kingdom; there is no sort of religious persons, who are perfectly at rest in their way, but their hope lieth in their end; but who shall attain this end, to whom doth this Kingdome belong, and who are they which shall inherit it; if ye will receive the testimony of Christ he thus describeth them: These are the persons (saith Christ) whose nature and spirit discovering it self in its operations, in its fruits of righteousness and holiness, is persecuted by the world. The world honoureth, esteemeth, pursueth the righteousness and holiness of its own stamp and nature, but hunteth after the life and soul of this to take and destroy it; yet not as righteousness, nor as holiness (Christ himself was not put to death as such, nor was any Prophet ever persecuted as a Prophet) but under the contrary dark black hue, wherein it still representeth it to it self. The world hath no true light (no true knowledge of God, no true understanding of the Scriptures, no true faith, no true love, no true worship, no true obedience, &c.) but would fain have its own darkness go for light: Therefore is it necessitated to represent the true light unto it self as darkness, and to hunt it out of its circumference, neither of which are very difficult (for the most part) under this low and weak appearance of light.

VERSE 11. *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

BECAUSE Persecution is bitter, Christ expatiateth upon it, opening both the course of it, the injury of it, and the ground of it, and comforting his Disciples under them all, *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you &c.*

The men of the world will revile those in whom the life of Christ is, in whom the righteousness of Christ is. They will scoff at the lustre, at the beauty, at the holiness, at the righteousness of Christ in them, as *Ishmael* did at *Isaac*. *This is the precious child of promise, indeed it is pity but this should be the heir.* The worldly spirit doth think it self more fit to inherit, more worthy to inherit (even by the rule of any of Gods dispensations, whether of the law formerly, or of grace now) then *Isaac*. Indeed *Isaac* is a young tender thing, an after-birth, and comes very short of *Ishmael* in the scale of man.

And they will not onely do this, but they will persecute them too. They will let them rest no where in the world, let them enjoy nothing in the world, but hunt them up and down; Thus will the men of the world do with their hearts and souls, and from the very nature of their spirits, where they espy the truth of the life and righteousness of Christ (for the great Contention between Christ and the world, is not so much a designed or known thing, but rather secret from a secret antipathy in their natures, whereby they most directly and naturally oppose and clash one against another, when they themselves perceive it not.

And that they might increase the persecution and set every one, every where against them, they will speak all manner of evil against them, they will represent them as

the most ir-religious, as the most unrighteous, as the most odious persons every way upon the face of the earth: As Hypocrites, Deceivers, Seducers, prophane, disturbers of the Peace, opposers of authority, in every respect hateful to God, and worthy to be hated of all man-kind. Thus is the pure, holy righteous nature of God in Christ and his seed (at any time upon its breaking forth in any) traduced by the world.

But (which is the comfort of the one, and the great condemnation of the other) they do all this *fallly* or *lying*. Some knowing that they lie, bring secretly convinced at their hearts, that there is a seed of truth in them whom they thus oppose, and that they are holy and righteous both in their spirits and lives, and not such as they represent them to be; others taking it upon trust (either slightly, or from such as they dare not but believe) may think they speak truth, though in truth they lie.

Now the ground of all this (of all this reviling, of all this persecution, of all these unjust aspersions and reproaches) is for Christs sake, because of the life of Christ in them, because of the image of Christ upon them, which appeareth in their lives and practises. This maketh the world so to revile, hate, persecute and reproach them; and the more zealous and devout the world is in any profession of Religion (whether Jewish as formerly, or Christian as now) the more mad are they in persecuting those in whom is the truth. Those *Jews* which lived in Christs time were a true and notable tipe, in their releasing *Barrabas*, and crucifying of *Jesus*; for this is the temper of all their successors; those who are exceeding zealous in an outward fleshy formal Religion (which in their judgement is required and justified by the letter of the Scripture, though in truth it is not so, as it is by them practised) they persecute the life, the spirit, the power so vehemently; that they will rather let any sort scape than them.

them. Though they know that *Barrabas* should die, yet *Barrabas* shall be spared, rather then *Christ* shall escape their hands. This is it which with all their might they pursue, to crucifie the life of *Christ*, the nature of *Christ*, the spirit of *Christ*, &c. And though some may do it ignorantly, (not knowing that it is the life, that it is the truth, that it is *Christ* the Lord of glory) yet all do it very naturally. *If the world hate you* (saith *Christ* to his Disciples) *ye know that it hated me, before it hated you.* And if *Christ*, who had such a strength of life, sweetness, and excellency in him, was thus dealt with; how shall any of his followers who appear in so much weaknesse, expect to fare better? what can they in reason look for, but to be reviled, persecuted, and have all manner of evil spoken against them? If they be no more of the world then *Christ* was, they can look to be no more owned by the world; no nor so much neither; because they have not so much in them as *Christ* had, to represent them lovely to the world.

Now what case is he in, who must remain in this world (which is bad enough of it self at best, if there were no ill usage from it) and yet is there reviled, hunted up and down, looked upon as the vilest man in it, as unfit for any use, for any service, for any company, as unworthy to be relieved in his greatest extremity, nay unworthy to much as to be suffered to live.

Ye shall *Christ*, *blessed are ye* notwithstanding all this, *may blessed are ye in all this.* This is an evidence of your life now, and of your right to, and certain enjoyment of the Kingdom hereafter; the world gives such a testimony of the life in you as is past denial.

VERSE 12. *Rejoyce and be exceeding glad.*

THis is the temper of spirit, these are the spiritual motions which should be in Disciples, in the midst of this usage from the world; or from *fleshly Israel*, who are but the world before God, they should not drink in that matter of sorrow which the World administers to them hereby, but feed upon that ground of joy, which the spirit of Christ opens and demonstrates to them. It is true, it is a bitter thing to be reviled, hated, and hunted by the world, as the leum and off-scouring of it, and must needs bring great and sharp sufferings to the flesh with it, wherein is matter of grief, pain, trouble and sorrow; yet all this doth not exclude a greater ground of joy, the vertue whereof may well swallow up all this sorrow, and leave no room for it. *Christ*, who knew the weight of all this misery (and the weaknesse and want of his Disciples) yet in the midst thereof bids them to rejoyce, yea to abound with joy, to exult in their spirits in great abundance, and with great intenseness, *Rejoyce and be exceeding glad.*

For great is your reward in Heaven.

Christ doth not barely bid them rejoyce, but layeth before them a solid ground or consideration of joy. It is not so much material what mens condition is here, as what it shall be hereafter; nor should Disciples so much consider the nature of their present state (what it now is) in reference to their worldly being, as what it refers to. They should not so much look upon the reward of their life and the motions of it, here in this world among men, as upon the reward of it by God in heaven. Now there, their reward shall be full; all these persecutions (and their sufferings thereby) shall be there recompenced very fully. So that those in whom the life of Christ, and an-

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swerably their persecution abounds now, their reward shall as well abound hereafter. Now hee who is spiritual, and spiritually eyeth the future estate of things, must needs be so railed and elevated with this, as that he cannot much feel the other. He who is truly eager after the great and abundant crop of glory, cannot but rejoyce in the plentiful sowing of the seed. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory.* And this we see and suck in the comfort of, *while wee looke not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*, 2 Corinth. 4. 17, 18.

For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.

Christ doth not onely lay down a solid ground of joy, but he follows it, he evidenceth it, he bringeth it home to their hearts, this hath been the state and portion of the life all along til your time, this is the way, which the Saints before you have walked in, towards their inheritance towards their Crown, they have passed through the Thorns and Briars of this world, into the possession of life; *for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

The Prophets were the most eminent in the life and light of God, in them did God live and shine most clearly, they were not as the world, they appeared nor as the world, they acted not as the world, but as the light and life of God guided them. And all along were they persecuted by fleshly Israel, by foolishly zealous Israel. Now if the same life in you bee dealt with as it was in them, doubtlesse ye also shall have the same reward. Ye beleeve that the state of the Prophets was good, and that they had ground of joy in the midst of all their persecution, in regard of their future reward from him that employed them, why so are ye also (who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for your testimonie either by word

or praise to the truth) and so have ye ground of joy likewise.

V. 13. 13. Ye are the Salt of the Earth.

SALT is the universal seasoner of things; that which makes them savory, that which keeps them from corruption, is salt.

The *Earth* wants Salt; the things of the Earth are not savory to the Palate of the Spirit without salt, they suddenly corrupt and putrify without salt.

Ye are the Salt; the seed of God are that Salt wherewith the world is to be seasoned. God who hath appointed to every thing its place, and fitted every thing for its place, hath made his children (his people whom he selects out of the world) the salt of the whole world. All the seasoning which the world hath is from the life of Christ in his Saints; the *Jews* they were the Salt formerly, the *Disciples of Christ* now; and the savor which comes from them, doth both purify and preserve the world.

But if the Salt hath lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted.

The vertue and excellencie of salt lieth in its savor. That which maketh its nature so excellent, and its use so universally profitable, is its savor; now there is a possibility for salt to lose its savor. The original salt, and the natural seed of the original salt cannot lose their savor, but that which is made salt in a dispensation way. A Disciple of Christ may lose the savor of the knowledge and life of Christ in his spirit.

But in this case, what remedy is there? what can season salt? If that which is the Fountain (in a dispensation) be dried up, wherewith shall it be seasoned? If the *Jews* lose the savor of the Law, or if the *Disciples of Christ*

lose the favour of the Gospel, how shall either of them be seasoned again? the unsavoury earth may be seasoned by the salt, but wherewith shall the salt be seasoned, if that prove unsavoury.

It is therefore good for nothing, and not to be used.

What is the salt good for, what is it fit for without its savour? of what use is a Disciple of Christ, without the favour of the Spirit of Christ? the salt without its savour is good for nothing. It is not good to express the nature of Salt, it is not good for any use that Salt is proper for.

Therefore good for nothing, from that time it becomes unprofitable. The Jews, when they have lost the true favour of the Law, they cannot season the world any more in their day; and the Disciples of Christ, when they have lost the true favour of the Gospel, they cannot season the World any more in their day neither. *Therefore,* from that time, all their servicableness is lost, all their seasonings of no value, of no advantage at all, if not prejudicial. Those which the Jews made Proselytes (having lost their own favour) they made ten times more the children of Hell then they were before: And those which the Disciples convert and season after their manner, they season with that which is worse then their own corruption. A natural state is better then the state of a false Religion, a religion which once came pure from God, but was afterward corrupted, having lost the truth of its life nature and state.

But to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

It is fit for no use, it is fit onely it self to be rejected and abused; it is fit to be cast out of the care and protection of God, out of that honourable place wherein he hath set it, and to be trampled upon by the World; this is the proper use for which it is fit, it is fit for this, and for nothing else: this the Jews were onely fit for when they lost their

their favour; and this the Disciples are onely fit for when they lose theirs. The Jews had a great deal of devotion towards God, a very diligent searching into the Law, with a very strict obfervation of the Law (they made no question but that they were the people of God, having the will of God revealed to them, and that they behaved themselves like the people of God) and so may the Disciples have in reference to the Gospel. But all this is of no use, for in the midst of all this, they are without the true favour, and therefore in justice they are to be cast out by God, and given up to the pride of men.

The true favour of Christ exalts his Disciples above the state of men, making them honourable in the eyes of men, demonstrating a greater neernesse, union, and communion between God and them, then others. The favor of the Law in the *Jews*; and the favour of the Gospel in the *Gentiles*, did evidence the presence of God with them, and did demonstrate true glory and worth in them; but the losse of that favour maketh them most justly a scorn and reproach.

Man in his heart cannot but acknowledge, that there is no such light, no such excellency, no such power over corrupt nature and temptations to vanity; that there is no such thing among them; as that life and nature which is found in the Disciples of Christ, when he breaths his life into them, separating and bestowing upon them his salt, or rather forming of them into the nature of salt: But when the favour of these things is lost in them, the spirit of man scorns and tramples upon them. God rumbles them down below man, and man quickly sets his feet upon them. How loathsome is it to the spirit of man, to hear a Disciple talk of living in the spirit, praying in the spirit, acting in the strength and beauty of the spirit, and yet he can plainly feel him living and acting by the spirit of man; yea and beneath the excellency of the spirit of

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man too ! And so to hear him talk of extraordinary righteousness and love, and yet to find an unrighteousness and bitterness of spirit in him, beyond what is found in other men, in men that have but ordinary righteousness, or but common sweetness in them. The Soul of the Lord loatheth such a Disciple, and so doth also the spirit of man.

Vers. 14. Ye are the light of the World.

THe People of God are his peculiar lights. He setteth up light in them, and by that light he shineth into the World; by that light the men of the World come to that little sight and knowledge that they have of him. How dark is the World where there are no Disciples? How light is that land or place, where there are Disciples clearly lighted by Christ, and clearly holding forth that light? the knowledge of Disciples concerning God and his Christ, the profession of Disciples in reference to their dependance upon him, and subjection to him; yea the several practises of Disciples both among themselves, and towards one another, and towards the World, are as so many beams of light, lighting to a more pure and excellent kind and principle of life, then the World is acquainted with.

A City that is set on an Hill, cannot be hid.

This is the State of the Church and People of God, when they are newly formed and come forth from God. They are a City, the life in them doth as naturally gather and combine together, for its own advantage safety and delight, as the naturall life of man doth, yea the spirit of the Lord formeth them into a City. As it is hee that renteth and breaketh them down afterwards, so it is hee that buildeth them at first, and it is he aloner, in which

sense it may be truly said, *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.*

This City of the Lord is set upon an Hill; it is brought forth and situated in the sight of the World. There is nothing so eminent, nothing so high, nothing so notorious throughout the World, as the Dispensations of God among his people. *Ferusalem* was in the eye of the whole earth, and so eminent also was the dispensation of Christ, when he built up his *New-Ferusalem*.

Now that which is made so eminent, that which is set in such publick view, cannot be hid. Indeed the life of a Christian in this present broken state may be very much hid (for it is now a time of hiding, there is not strength enough in the life to come forth and shew it self; it cannot now come forth and boast in the Lord, in reference to that vertue and energy which it hath received from him, but rather lie and mourn for want of that whereof it is stripped:). But when God bringeth forth his seed, though it be but typically in a Dispensation (as hee did the Jews of old, in their legal Dispensation, or the Disciples after them, in their more spiritual Dispensation) such a society, such a City so set up in so open view, cannot bee hid.

VERSE 15. *Neither do men light a Candle, and put it under a Bushell, but on a Candle stick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

Light which is set up eminently, cannot be hid; nor indeed doth it well agree with the nature or end of light, to be hid. Man doth not light his small lights to hide them; no more doth God his. God, who is the great light, enlightens all, and every true light, as it hath the same nature in it, so it is guided thereby to the same use and end. The end of God in lighting the meanest light,

light, is that it might give light round about, according to its strength and proportion: And that which is true light in its kind, if it be not covered over, cannot but shine and give light. These two things make the people of God very observable, their light and their situation. They are the light of God, which God hath lighted to dart forth rays of light upon the dark World, by which the World may come to see, and without which the World cannot see; and they are not hid and laid out of the way, but they are set upon a *Candlestick*; they are so placed that the World may see and reap benefit by the light. By this light (if it shine clearly and truly) the World may see the excellent things of God, the excellent waies of God, the misery and death of the paths of mans spirit; the glory, beauty, life, liberty, rest and peace of the paths of the nature and spirit of God. The great happinesse of the World lieth in these lights (though they are still enemies to them) and the *Prince of darkness* employeth all his Art and Industry, either to extinguish them or to damp them, or by setting up counterfeit lights, to draw away the esteem from them.

VERSE 16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.*

YE must lend the World light, or they cannot see the excellency of your nature and life, of your motions and operations: Why let your light so shine that they may see: that they may see what an excellent spirit is in you, and how excellently it acteth. Hold forth the true knowledge of God, and the true way of Worship and Obedience, and the true path of love and righteounesse, that the World may see how excellent these things are in themselves, and how exactly your nature and spirit an-

swereth them. When the World shall once begin to espy the excellency of the waies of God, and the true worth of the nature and motions of his people, when they shall see in his people such an understanding devotion towards God, such an intire love and communion among themselves, such wonderfull righteousness and sweetness towards all; though they cannot behold God himself (he being in Heaven, and so not within the reach of the eye of this understanding) yet they cannot but admire and commend the worth of that father, who hath begotten and brought forth such Children, and is able to maintain them at such an excellent rate of life. The loose unworthy carriage of those that pretend to God, is a shame unto him; but the true and vigorous life of a Christian is his Crown and Glory. When the light of God shines purely in his people, comprehending and advancing the true light of man, men cannot but acknowledge in their hearts the true worth of this light, and ascribe honour, glory and praise unto him from whom it comes. Mans formal praising and honouring of God is nothing; for under that he hides all his enmity against him, which he putteth forth against all these particular appearances of God, wherein God discovereth himself most at present, and seeketh most to be honoured in: but this is a falling down before that present appearance of God, wherein his nature putteth forth it self, seeking acknowledgement and honour from man, for the good of man.

VERSE. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

REMEMBER that Christ is speaking to Disciples, who because they find the Lord bringing forth a new light and a new life in them, under a new Dispensation, may be

be apt to think that he destroyeth the old Dispensation, setting nothing by that life which it called for and led unto: Whereas he doth not bring forth a light or life contrary to it, but onely superiour both in kind and degree, which comprehendeth the other, to which both the Law and the Prophets did testifie, and in which the Law and the Prophets do find place. *Think not* (saith Christ) &c. take heed of that mistake, as if I came to lay all flat which the Law and the Prophets have spoken, as if I came to throw down what they have built, making it of no use, of no effect; no, I am not come to throw down either Law or Prophets, but to establish them: I onely bring in that life which they pointed at, and in such a manner as they suffer no wrong, but thereby attain their proper use, place, and honour. The end of Christs coming was not to break down the Law or the Prophets by the power of his life, or by the lustre of his light, but to fulfill them in it. This was the end of Christs coming, and of his own and his Apostles Preaching, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in himself and in his Disciples.

VERSE 18. *For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth passe, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.*

THE Law is the rule of the humane nature, the rule of the creature, the line of the Creation (or the proper measure for all the motions of it) which came forth with the Creation, remaineth with the Creation, and cannot passe away afore it. Yea till Christ and all his seed have perfectly fulfilled and answered the Law, it must not passe away. The righteous nature of Christ will be bringing forth the righteousness of the Law in all his seed, till Heaven and Earth passe away, and will have brought

brought it forth perfectly in them all before it passe away. The Law which was too hard for *Adam*, which broke *Adam* in pieces, shall be very easie and pleasant and in no wise dangerous to *Christ*, or any of *his seed*; the strength and vertue of their nature shall so far excell any thing which the Law can require. The Law of the Spirit once truly written in the heart of any, is more large, more full every way more powerfull and abundaunt, then any Law in the letter can be. He who is meerly littéral, can never fulfill the letter of the Law; but he who is thoroughly spiritual cannot avoid the fulfilling of it; for living but his own life, he comprehendeth all the righteousness and excellency of the Law therein; yea goeth far beyond it. What the Papists weakly imagine, in their carnal sense, is most true here; *Every motion of this life, is a work of supererogation*, in reference to any outward Law; it hath more excellency, more fullness in it, then any Law can call for. The Law can onely call for what is in man; but this hath the vertue of another nature, the power of another life in it. And as all the motions of *Christ* (even the most common) were transcendant because of the excellency of his nature, whereof they did all partake; so also are all the motions of the same life in his seed. They have fuller life, truth, excellency, then the Law knoweth how to require or judge of. The Law was not made for *Christ* or his seed (though *Christ* came under the Law, then finding and still bringing forth his seed under the Law) but yet *Christ* fulfilled the Law; his excellent nature being placed there, could not prove defective therein. And when *Christ* hath brought his seed by the efficacy of his redemption, from under the Law, (whereby they are made weak at present) and their own nature once commeth to its strength in them, they will not be able to fall short of any thing which is in the Law. This was the end of Gods sending *Christ* in the flesh (of which he cannot misse)

misle) that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Rom. 8. 3. 4.

VERSE 19. *Whoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments and shall teach men so he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

THe esteem and glory in the Kingdom shall be according to the degree of life in those that inherit it: Now by vertue of life is the Law fulfilled; He who is renewed and swallowed up in the life of Christ, he knoweth and can teach, and cannot but praise the Law. He who knoweth not Christ, cannot truly teach, understand, and obey the Law. He therefore who doth most abundantly fulfill the Law, is most powerfull in the vertue and dignity of Christ, and proportionably shall have the greatest place and reward in the Kingdom. But he that swereth and draweth others aside from the Law, whatsoever he may esteem of himself (what abundant light soever to himself he may seem to have, and what power of life soever he may seem to himself to act his from) yet he shall be of esteem little enough in the Kingdom. Let the other seem to him never so despicable, poor, low, carnal, &c. in his principles, and practices; yet when God discovereth things what they are, and assigneth them their places, he shall appear great in the Kingdom. Let him judge of himself as very high and spiritual in the mysterious knowledge of Christ, yet among all that know the life of Christ, among all that pretend towards the Kingdom, among all that have tasted and can judge of the vertue of Christs life, and of the nature of his Kingdom, he shall be accounted the least. The truth is, though he

VERSE 20. *For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Without holiness (without a very strict exact holiness in nature, life and conversation) *no man shall see the Lord.* The Scribes and Pharisees are the strictest persons that now appear: but unless ye be more righteous than they are, unless ye be more righteous than they teach you to be, ye shall never come into that Kingdom at which both ye and they aim. I tel you, it is another manner of righteousness must bring you thither, then ever ye heard of from them, another manner of righteousness then ever they were able to reach either in knowledg or practise.

There are several things which would require illustration for the cleer opening of this, as first, *what the Kingdom of Heaven is?* Secondly, *what it is to enter into the Kingdom?* Thirdly, *what the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees is*, which must be exceeded, if there be any enterance into the Kingdom? Lastly, *wherein the righteousness of those who would enter into the Kingdom, must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, whether in nature, kind, degree, motion or operation, or in all these?

I intend not to answer these things so distinctly as I have mentioned them, yet perhaps that which I have to say, may (at least in part) comprehend the answer to them all.

The Kingdom of Heaven is that state of life blessedness rest and satisfaction, which the whole creation groaneth after, and the seed of God have an especial promise and expectation of.

The whole life and the creature here, is but death: all their happiness, but misery: all their motions but toil: and that which they would fain make shift with for rest, is not

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rest:

rest: yea there is nothing which they can enjoy, nothing in which so much as the sound and solid spirit of man, or the creature can be satisfied.

But there is another state which is covered with this, and is to grow out of this. There is a true life, there is a place of blessedness, there is a land of rest, there is that which can satisfy, that which can be enjoyed and can fill. This the creature would fain have, this the seed hath the promise of the inheritance of.

This state is called a *Kingdom*, wherein they that are found worthy shall reign. The Kingly life shall reign in this Kingdom. Here in this world every thing is in bondage and slavery, even that which seemeth to be most free: but in the other world it shall be otherwise, every thing that is admitted thither, shall reign. It shall not only live, but reign in life, reign in blessedness, reign in rest, reign in enjoyment. And what shall it reign in? What shall it reign over? It shall reign in all things, it shall reign over all things. It shall reign in the Lord, it shall reign over the Lord. The Lord shall be its Kingdom, and it shall be the Lords Kingdom. They shall perfectly reign over, and perfectly be subject unto each other. They shall not only reign in and over themselves (which neither man nor the seed could ever yet attain) but they shall likewise reign in and over the Lord. They shall not only have the perfect command in and over themselves, but also of the Lord. They shall have the perfect use and command of the Spirit, as well as be perfectly used and commanded by the Spirit. They shall, as Christ their head did, receive the Spirit as a gift, as their Spirit, to live in, make use of, and dispose of. This is the right of a true and perfect nature, grown up to perfection in the Lord to reign there. Where should it reign but in its own Territories? and what Territories, what portion, what inheritance hath it but the Lord? where should the Lord reign but in his people,
who

who are his house? and where should his people reign, but in him who is their habitation? (*Thou art our habitation from everlasting*, Psal. 90.)

This is *the true reign*, this is *the Kingdom of Heaven*; It is situated in Heaven, it is of an heavenly nature. This reign, this Kingdom is not to be found in this world, but in heaven. (The heavens and the earth are both representations of somewhat in God, and have both their true place and nature there, which yet doth not hinder, but that there may be a local Heaven and Hell, as well as a local earth, wherein these Spirits may as well be in these bodies hereafter, as they are now in this earth) It is not of any such nature as the heart of man would conceive, but of an heavenly nature. Man, as he cannot tel how to be subject unto God, so neither can he tel how to reign in God. This is such a reign, as is fitted only for the seed, for the new life; and for that alone too, when grown to its full stature (the child must not be a Prince here, though it is true it may have a taste of it also in a dispensation) None can learn how to manage this Kingdom, but those who are born, bred and brought up to it.

Entering into the Kingdom, is the passing out of this present estate of slavery and misery, into the true estate of liberty and blessedness: which may be partly done here, but is chiefly and perfectly to be done hereafter, when all the exercises of the life in the seed are passed over, and they thereby made fit for it.

This entering denotes both the designe of disciples, and their industry and diligence about it. They seek the way to life, they walk towards it, and they aim and strive to enter. This is the whole work and business which disciples drive at (both which the Jews of old under the Law did level at, and which Christians since under the Gospel level at also) namely to come to the Kingdom, to walk towards the Kingdom, to enter into the Kingdom, to pass

through this present estate of death and wretchedness (which the Spirit and wayes of man further lead into, and involve in) into the true state of life and perfection.

Now mark what Christ (who knew this Kingdom, and the true way and several steps to it) saith to his Disciples. He tells them freely and plainly, that be they what they wil, do they what they can, strive never so hard, pray never so hard, take never so much pains, &c. yet unless upon one supposition they shall never come there, which is, unless they be righteous ones, unless they be pure ones, unless they be clean ones; clean in heart, clean in life, clean throughout. Nothing that hath any manner of unrighteousness, any manner of uncleanness in it, shall enter into that righteous, into that clean place. Nothing but that which is perfectly pure, perfectly holy, shall enter into the pure and holy God, shall come within the limits of his Kingdom to reign with him, to reign in him, to possess and be possessed of him.

The Scribes and Pharisees were the strictest persons then living, they aimed at that righteousness, which God himself prescribed, and they strove very hard after it, and did in a great degree attain: and yet they are discarded, with all their righteousness, from any right, to or share in the Kingdom. *The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, was the greatest righteousness in view, of any upon the face of the earth, and the best righteousness which man could then attain (for surely so it was, take it at the best, though such as were hypocrites amongst them, might be the worst of all sorts) yet Christ saith, there must be a more abundant righteousness (more perfect in the nature, more perfect in the fruit) found in those who enter into the Kingdom.

Now because this is so considerable and weighty a point, and withal so little thought of, I shall draw forth this following conclusion or observation, which may represent

present the true nature and Spirit of it, to a spiritual eye.
The observation is this,

That the disciples of Christ, or the eminentest Christians, unless they have a more exact righteousness (more perfect in its nature, more perfect in its operation) then the Spirit of man can attain, they shall not possibly reach that blessedness they aim at: they shall never come within the bounds, never know what appertains to the happiness of the Kingdom of God. Though disciples should seek after and attain the righteousness of that dispensation, under which they are set (nay of every dispensation) yet they must throw it away al as dross, and have another righteousness sown and springing up in them, if ever they be saved.

That pattern is very full and pregnant, *Philip 3. 4. to 9. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the Law, a Pharisee: Concerning zeale, persecuting the Church: touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blamelesse. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doublelesse, and I count all things but losse, for the excellency of the knowledge of Iesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the losse of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.*

Mark ye, what an excellent righteousness *Paul* here threw away: and yet *Paul* as a Christian, and so also Christians have a more excellent righteousness to throw away then that which is here particularly specified, though that which many Christians stick to, and set up as their righteousness, comes far short of this. That beleeving from a command of Scripture, which they so magnify, is as legal and as far from true righteousness, as the Jewish obliervation of the Law was. Indeed beleeving may be said to be the righteousness of this dispensation, as obedience to the Law was the righteousness of that: but as

that dispensation with the observation of it, did neither include or exclude from life necessarily : no more doth this. He that did truly from true life obey the Law, could not miscarry, nor he that doth truly so obey the Gospel : But the Jews generally fel in that ; and so did also the Christians in this.

Here was the great mistake of the Jews, they thought that their outward temporal dispensation would save them eternally : and this is also the great mistake of Christians. They both mistake alike, and they are equally confident in their mistakes : so that it will be as hard a work to convince Christians now, as it was to convince Jews then. The Jews thought to be saved by obedience to the letter of the Law, and Christians think to be saved by obedience to the letter of the Gospel. God said to the Jews by Moses, *Do this and live, he gave them statutes and ordinances, which if a man do, he shall live in them :* They made no question but that this was the true way to life, and so applied themselves to doing. God saith to disciples by Christ, *Beleeve this, and live, he that beleeveth and is baptised, shall be saved :* They make no question but that this is the true way to life, and so apply themselves to beleeving. Indeed both wil prove the true way, as God may manage them ; but man wil be baffled in both. It is not obedience to the letter of the Law by doing, nor obedience to the letter of the Gospel by beleeving, but obedience of the new life to the Spirit, either in the Law or in the Gospel, which wil alone avail. It is the Lamb-like Spirit, following the Spirit of the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth, which passeth with him into life. The Spirit of man beleeving, is no more acceptable unto God, then the Spirit of man working. Both were acceptable in their kind, and in their day, and both shall have their proper reward ; but not this acceptation, not this reward. Let me speak this over again in other words, perhaps

haps the variety of expression may occasion some further illustration of it.

The *righteousness* which the Spirit of man may attain under the Gospel, that *faith*, that *love*, those *good works*, are a more excellent kind of righteousness in some respect, than any obedience of his to the Law: yet they agree therewith in one common nature, and cannot amount to true acceptance or justification, no more than the righteousness of the Law could. They shall have that justification which is proper to them (as the righteousness of the Law also shall) but they shall not have that justification which belongs to the new life and the motions of it, which alone are born of God, brought forth by him, and to which alone the Kingdom appertains.

Indeed the Kingdom is set before the view of man, in both these waies, to aim at: but is not by either of these to be obtained, though many under each shall obtain. They who had the true fear of God under the Law (who did truly fear the Lord, from the new life sown in them, and thus springing up) and they which have the true faith and love in the Gospel, shall not miscarry: but the spirit of man, striving never so hard either under the one or the other, yea though he be never so well fitted, qualified and assisted by God so to do, shall be sure to miss of what he striveth after. And thus shal that saying be abundantly verified in both dispensations, *Many* (under each) *run the race, but few obtain the prize*: *Many* (in each) *are called to run, but few chosen to obtain*.

The *reason* of this is very evident. Man must needs fall short in al his desires, in al his designs, in al his motions, in al his endeavours, in all his attainments: Nothing in him, nothing from him can entitle him to the Kingdom: No obedience of his to the Law, no faith of his to the Gospel: Why? Because he is fleshly; and so is al that comes from him. Al that comes from the Spirit of man is fleshly;
It

It is not Spirit, and therefore in justice cannot have the reward of Spirit. Entering into the Kingdom belongs to the Spiritual seed, is due to the nature, life, and motions thereof: therefore God cannot justly give it to the natural seed, because of any of the motions thereof, though heightened and made never so excellent by never so many gifts from him.

This very reason Christ renders concerning this very thing, *Ioh. 3.* The dispute there is concerning *Faith*, which is the only way to enter into the Kingdom. (The way by the Law was cancelled, or at least a throwing down, and the way by faith was now a setting up; though not so as man is apt to understand it) *Nicodemus*, he comes in ver. 2. professedly owning Christ, and believing in him, and giving a good ground of his owning him, *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* Christ tells him ver. 3. This will not do. It is not a faith from the reason and understanding of man, though never so fully convinced, but a seeing, a believing from a new seed, from a new birth, which will lead to the Kingdom: *Iesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* He says this over again to him, telling him of what he must be new born, ver. 5. namely, of *water* and of the *Spirit*. Water and Spirit must be his substance, he must be new-made-up of them. He must be made-up of the seed of Christ, and of the anointing of God, he must be formed out of and into both these, if ever he enter into the Kingdom.

And he giveth the reason of all this, ver. 6. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* Let a man be convinced by outward reason, let him be changed by outward convictions, (though they be convictions from the Spirit, and accompanied with gifts from God to his Spirit) it is but flesh
that

that is changed, and it is changed by flesh, and it is changed but into flesh. Let never so many changes be made in man by the very Preachings and Miracles of CHRIST; let him be drawn either to the obedience of the Law, or to the faith of the Gospel, yet he is still but flesh, and these motions in him are but fleshly. All the principles or motions of Faith, Love, or any other Gospel duty, as they are wrought or stirred up in man by any outward reason, by the force of any conviction upon his spirit, as they thus are in, or thus flow from the spirit of man, they are but fleshly, and cannot entitle or advantage unto a true spiritual estate. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* Let a man be never so excellently born of flesh (brought by the conviction of the Word and Miracles into never so clear and rational a believing) he is still but flesh: He is not a Son, not an Heir, and therefore shall not inherit. *And that which is born of the spirit, is spirit.* That alone which is formed of a spiritual substance, is spiritual, and shall alone see, and enter into the Kingdom, to which it is born by its descent from the spirit. The true nature of the spirit which is in it, appearing in its nature, and in all its motions, evidenceth its sole right, and desert hereof.

VER. 21, 22. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger if the judgement.*

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement: And whosoever shall say to his Brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the counsel; but whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be in danger of hel fire.

YE have been taught by your former Teachers and Expounders of the Law, that ye must not kill: That

whosoever did kil, did break the Law, and should be found guilty to judgement; but he that did forbear killing, was out of the danger of this command.

But I tell you, that unjust anger against your Brother, or the provoking of your Brother unjustly to anger, by giving him any reproachful language, will bring you in danger of Gods judgement, yea of hel-fire, which is appointed to burn up all such fruits of evil, and the roots from whence they proceed.

For my part, I cannot conceive that ever Hel was intended meerly to torment and destroy the creature, but rather to purge and purifie it, and is onely so far tormenting, as it is necessarily heated to that end. Do you think God will lose any of his own, any creature of his? Will he suffer it so to depart from him, as that he will not again recover it? Is this for the honour of the great Creator of all things, to lose so much of the best part of his creation for ever (for doubtless the soules of Men and Angels may justly be esteemed so) as we imagine, in such a sense as we imagine? Is this the proper use of his great fire, the fire of his eternal wrath, onely to make miserable for ever; but not at all to purge? This indeed might wel become a fire of the unclean wrath of man, but is in no wise suitable to the holy wrath of God, which is onely kindled that it might make holy, and paineth only in reference unto that.

Vers. 23, 24. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there rememberest that thy Brother hath ought against thee:

Leave there thy gift before the Altar, and goe thy way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Explication. Thou shalt not offer any gift unto God, if thou hast ought against thy Brother, until thou be reconciled to him. I will not suffer thee to offer thy gift, until thou be reconciled to thy Brother.

ALL services to God are unacceptable with him, while there is a root of unrighteous and unholyness within, which will discover itself by unrighteous and unholy practises outwardly. A spirit that is unjust and unrighteous towards man, God cannot endure should come with offerings of service to him.

The sacrifices and services of God are to weaken and eat out corruption: When therefore wickedness and corruption is hid and nourished under these, the institutions of the Lord himself become loathsom in his own eyes. The chief loveliness of these things is not so much in themselves, as in their end and use, wherein being vitiated they cannot but prove very unlovely.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of Rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-goats. When ye came to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my Courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me: the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting: Your New Moons, and your appointed Feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them, Isa. 1. ver. 11, 12, 13, 14. Yea, Prayers (which being of a more inward, and sweet nature) might seem more acceptable, God disdaineth them too, ver. 15. And when you spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; when you make many prayers I will not hear. Why, what is the matter? Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to doe evil, learn to doe wel, seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherlesse, plead for the widdow: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as

scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimfon, they shall be as wool. ver. 16, 17, 18.

While man doth that which is unrighteous, that which is cruel, that which is unnatural, that which is against the Law of his nature, or the Law of that dispensation under which he is set: God will not so much as look towards him in all his prayers, in all his services, though they directly arise from the law of his nature, or of that dispensation wherein he is, and though he be never so frequent and zealous in them.

O that men did but see with what eye, with what heart God receiveth that which they account most precious and lovely to him! How exceedingly he disdaineth them in his own spirit; but withall wil not so much as give them any notice that he so doth! It is the highest kind of disdain, to scorn to express our disdain. God will not vouchsafe so much as to reason with them about it, why he doth not accept them. He tels them in general, that all is to no purpose, *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices, &c.* Sacrifices, be they never so many, shall have no manner of force to expiate any of your sins, but they shall stand as firm upon the score, as if ye had never sacrificed. Why? ye nourish wickedness in you, and think your sacrifices shall amend all. I will disappoint you in this; I will not take notice of them, nor vouchsafe to reason with you about it, while ye thus maintain your selves in iniquity and oppression. But wash your selves from these things; be righteous and tender towards your neighbour, and then your services in this nature may be to some purpose. My Institutions ye shall not find to be in vain, if ye observe them in my way: My Sacrifices shall be able to effect what they were appointed for; they shall be an effectual atonement for sin; they shall quite blot them out, quite take away the tincture of them, inso much as were they either as scarlet,
or

or crimſon, they ſhall be white as ſnow or wool. But ſo long as ye give your ſelves ſcope in unrighteouſneſs of any kinde, thinking to quiet all by your Sacrifices and Prayers, ye do but deceive your ſelves, and engage God ſo much the more againſt your ſouls. God will not be mocked in his Diſpenſations either under the Law, or under the Goſpel: They ſhall not nourish ſin, but kill ſin, where they are efficacious. God will attain his end, or man alſo ſhall miſs of his. There is a power goeth forth in the diſpenſations of God, to change as wel as to juſtifie. The Jews were to be a righteous people in their converſations, as wel as to expiate their offences by Sacrifices. He is careful not to ſin, who hath the free uſe of the great Advocate, 1 *Joh. 2. 1, 2.* Whomſoever Chriſt waſheth from his old filthineſs, he alſo bringeth forth in a new power of life. It is not ſinning againſt men, and asking God forgiveness, which wil ſerve the turn; but what ever injury we do to our Brother, we muſt as wel recompence him, as ask pardon of God for it. *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee: Leave there thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way, firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

If thou haſt ſinned againſt thy Brother, if thou haſt done him wrong, if thou haſt been unjuſtly angry with him, or haſt provoked him to anger againſt thee; if there be any controverſie between him and thee, wherein thou haſt been the offender, go and make up that breach firſt: Do not offer to approach with any thing to God; do not think any prayer, any ſacrifice, any ſervice can be accepted, while this injury of thine towards thy Brother remaineth; but go and undo that firſt, and then thy ſervices may be for the better, and not for the worſe. But before thou haſt done this, do not ſo much

as think of any service to God ; it will but do thy soul hurt ; it will but draw down wrath upon thee in that dispensation under which thou art ; yea thy coming thus with thine offering, will but put God in mind of thy wickedness, and hasten wrath upon thee.

Religion towards God must proceed from an upright principle in man, or it cannot be accepted in any kind. *Sacrificing* or *Praying* will not discharge us from the unrighteousness we act towards man. He that will have pardon under any dispensation, must have light and strength from God to observe his way and law of pardon, which is, not to offer injury, but to forgive. He who hath not this spirit in him, he who doth not thus, shall find his pleading the sacrifice of Christ as ineffectual for him under the Gospel, as ever the Jews did find their offering up of legal sacrifices ineffectual for them under the Law.

VER. 25. *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him ; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into prison.*

Agree with thine adversary quickly.

EVERY one whom we offer injury unto, every Brother who hath ought against us, is our *adversary* : Be he never so sweet and meek in his own nature, and do he never so freely forgive, yet he is an adversary to that unrighteousness which we offer to him : Every corrupt man is an adversary to him which harmeth him ; he cannot avoyd it : And every righteous nature is an adversary to the unrighteousness of that nature, which seeketh its own advantage by anothers prejudice.

This adversary is to be *agreed* with ; which is, not only an obtaining peace with him, but also a making of him amends

amends in respect of the injury. To restore to him what we have unduly defrauded him of, or in any other kind to make him full recompence. The life of Christ cannot endure to be in debt to the spirit of man, but will pay every relation, and every person what it oweth thereto, and make full restitution, or satisfaction for any injury. *Zacheus restored fourfold.*

This agreement is to be made *quickly*. Things of danger, things of concernment, things of consequence, are not to be deferred. Things that are to be transacted under a dispensation, can onely be done while that dispensation lasteth, and onely in the day of it; (*Work while the day lasteth*, saith Christ) yea onely by us in our moment of that day; for our whole time, though it be with us our day, yet in respect of the season or duration of the dispensation, it is but a moment.

Whiles thou art in the way with him.

We are all here walking in the way, and going to our Judge. What is done here, cannot be altered when we come thither; but then we must be judged. Therefore what will be dangerous or disadvantageous to us then, we must consider and prepare for now. The judgement is for this present state, for these present motions here in this life, here in this body, and must pass accordingly. We cannot mend any thing there, which we have done amiss here: *Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation*; therefore look to it now.

Left at any time the adversary deliver thee to the Judge.

The Law of God lieth open and fair to every party; and the most righteous man, though he doth truly and freely forgive, yet in his forgiveness he refers the things to God. Christ said, *Father forgive them, they know not what they do*, and yet he did also commit his cause, and refer himself to him that judgeth righteously; and so doe all his seed. We must plead the cause of God against all unright-

unrighteousness. We must testifie against all iniquity which our spirits have, or can discover, in any whatsoever; and if it be not washed off, if it be not forgiven, we must plead for justice. Him that hath done us wrong we must deliver up to the Judge. Christ will begin, and all his Saints will follow him (as they have already followed him in hearty forgiveness) and *rejoyce when they see the vengeance*. The justice of God shall be dispensed in so righteous, in so sweet a way, as shall satisfie the tenderest, and most forgiving spirit, insomuch that he shall leap at it, and rejoyce in it.

And the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Whosoever is found guilty there shall be punished. Thy adversary shall be punished if he have not forgiven thee; but though he hath forgiven thee, thou notwithstanding shalt be punished if thou hast not agreed with him. If once thou come before the Judge, and beest found guilty, there is no way but to the Officer, and to prison. God hath his prison for sinners, for malefactors, for those whom he condemns: He hath his officers to bind the person, and to cast into prison; and there must thou go, if thy brother hath ought against thee. Therefore thou hadst best be real and speedy in making up the breach here. Or thus;

The light of God (whether in common nature, or in any other dispensation, either by his Prophets, his Son, or his Apostles) is the great adversary to corrupt man. Man is now in the way with this light, this light is now to be agreed with by him: now is the time for him to make his peace with it, that it accuse him not before the throne of God. For this light is righteous, and will not spare but faithfully implead its adversary; and the Judge is righteous, and wil deliver up to the Officer every one whom it impleadeth. So that there is no way of escaping the prison hereafter, but by a fair agreement here.

Vers.

VERSE 26. *Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

Christ sets on this counsel of his very close, by shewing the nature and danger of this prison. There is no getting out of it, nor is there any compounding there; Thou must undergo the smart of it: There must thou lye until thou hast tully discharged all, so as the just Judg who cast thee in, shall be forced to say he hath no more against thee.

Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means, &c.

Christ, who knoweth the prison, who knoweth the nature of God, who knoweth the course of judgement, taketh it here upon his truth, that there is no escape thence by any means. There are waies of pacification and escape in every dispensation in this world; but then there are none. When once you come to judgement, there is no way but to prison if you be found guilty: and when once you come to prison, there is no way out till all be discharged.

Now what the meaning of this is, is not very easie to determine. Some affirm the meaning to be thus; *Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing*; that is to say, *Never*; for the creature is never able to pay, and so must ever lye there.

This may be true in part: That unrighteous nature, that unrighteous principle, with all its unrighteous motions and works, shall never be let out more, but shall be burnt and smoak, and its smoak shall ascend for ever: But that the poor creature shall alwaies lye in prison. I confesse I doe not beleieve. It is as just with God to deliver his creature from the fire, as to burn up its unrighteousness in the fire. The creature is the Lords, and he cannot lose

it, or suffer it to lose it self, further then in a design. The greatest loss that can be imagined, is but to set off the glory of a greater recovery. But the creature shall lye there its time, or its season, which may very well be called *for ever*, in such a sence as that phrase is used in dispensations; yea its unrighteousness, or that which is the creatures in this state, shall remain there for ever; but that which is Gods shall come out. Or thus; The creature shall come out when it hath *payd the uttermost farthing*, when the whole principle nature, and fruit of that life is consumed which hath led it into this. God is excellently wise and good in his greatest severity towards the worst, from the beginning to the end.

VERSE 27, 28. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery.*

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his heart.

THe former Scribes have taught you, that ye must forbear the act of Adultery. But I tel you, that the least motion of the body from the least desire of the mind, is Adultery before God: It cometh from the same root with the other, and is of the same nature; insomuch as that Law which condemneth that, cannot justifie, or pass by this. Mans eye is most upon the outward acts of sin; but Gods eye is most upon the inward nature, upon the root of sin; and that he bends himself chiefly to deal with, in those whom he justifieth and saveth. He that is new born, is born of that water which washeth away his former nature, of that *leaven* which overspreadeth the whole man, and purgeth out the old leaven wholly. He doth not only forbear the outward act of Adultery, but he hath neither an eye, nor an ear, nor an heart of Adultery.

Ver.

VERSE 29, 30. *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: For it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

THAT which causeth us to act amiss, is somewhat within; somewhat in our nature, somewhat in our constitution, somewhat in some of our members. If there be any evil eye, or hand in us, that eye, or that hand will be acting like it self, and so bring prejudice upon the whole body.

In disciples who are renewed by Christ (in a dispensation at least) The spirit of man is somewhat changed in them, and cometh forth new formed. In stead of unbelief, there is faith; instead of the enmity of mans nature, there is love; instead of injustice and oppression, there is righteousness and shewing of mercy; instead of prophane-ness or idolatry, there is seeking and worshipping of God in Christ. But yet these disciples in the midst of all this manifest renewedness of heart and life, may have a secret path of wickedness (See, saith David, *if there be any way of wickedness in me*, Psal. 139.) They may not be wholly renewed, wholly slain; but there may be a dear right eye, or a dear right hand left, which as long as it is left will be acting and drawing them aside from the truth. Any peece of the old sinful nature left, will have a sinful path to walk in. The old corruption will get into the new form, and there hide it self in an eye, or an hand, or some member or other of the body. (The subtle old Serpent will leave the house when he finds it ruining, and

into the new, into the new principles, into the new life, into the new spirit, into the new man; and though he cannot suddenly overpread the whole man again, yet if he can shelter himself in an eye or an hand, for the present, it will suffice.) And this will draw the whole man aside, engaging it in practises which will be sin, and a snare unto it, in that dispensation wherein God hath set it. Now such a thing will make voyd the efficacy of the present dispensation (to any person in whom it thus is) as the corruption of the Jews did theirs. *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*, in any dispensation whatsoever. *Let him that nameth the name of the Lord, depart from iniquity*, in, and according to the tenure of that dispensation wherein he knoweth and nameth the Lord. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what a man soweth that shall he also reap.* There is great weight and seriousness in all the dispensations of God, and therefore men had need be very considerate and wary, and not run rashly into the misery, or trifle away the happiness of them.

But what remedy is there in such a case, supposing that a disciple in this his new mold be radically corrupt (as I may so say) in some of his members; supposing his chief eye, or his chief hand (his most precious Gospel light, his most precious Gospel strength) be so ill constituted, as it erreth and leadeth him aside in his highest most spiritual and most delightful motions: What must this disciple do to secure himself from the danger hereof.

There is a remedy which Christ prescribeth here, but it is very harsh and to be executed with much cruelty towards a mans self. He must first pluck out his eye, or cut off his hand, this right eye, this right hand, and then throw it away. A man must be rough and sudden, sharp and severe with himself, or he cannot do it. O how hardly
doth

doth man part with the members of his old body (his old lusts and principles) but his new are much more dear to him. Yet this course Christ prescribes to them that would attain the end they aim at, who would meet with life and salvation in the end, and not perish; *Pluck it out, or cut it off, and cast it from thee.* It notes four things.

First, the necessity of a separation; it must be plucked out, or cut off; plucked out, if it be an eye; cut off, if it be an hand.

Secondly, a man must do this himself: God hath weapons to do it with, but it must be done by a mans own hand.

Thirdly, this separation must be very full, it must be cordial and compleat: A man must not pluck it out and lay it by him, but he must cast it away.

Lastly, it must be done forcibly, with much zeal and indignation. A man that dallies; or deals tenderly with himself, will never be able to part with that which is so nigh and natural to him.

Now this Christ urgeth upon his Disciples, from the danger of neglecting it. It is better to be at this pain at present, then to undergo the loss of the whole for ever. It is better to use this cruelty to one member now, then to have the whole body cast into hell, implying a necessity of the one. Whatsoever is not true and right in its kind, must into hel; the corrupt natural man, the corrupt Jew, the corrupt Disciple. He that hath one ill member, must go wholly into hell, because of that.

The dispensations of God do, as it were, new make men. The Jew was new made by the Law, the Disciple was new made by the Gospel. Now if there be any flaw found in the vessel because of that, the whole vessel must into the fire. If the Jew be not every way right in his kind, to hel must he go; and if the Disciple be not every way right in his kind, to hel must he go likewise, and to his own place there.

Now

Now the miſery that man may ſuffer by being mold-
ed under a diſpenſation at preſent, is nothing in com-
pare with that which he ſhall meet with, who is caſt in-
to hell. Therefore Chriſt adviſeth them, as being the
more profitable, to undergo ſharpneſs now under their
preſent diſpenſation, then to expoſe themſelves to the
miſery of hell, into which they muſt certainly go, and
undergo the pain both of the never-dying worm, and
unquenchable fire (if there be any thing left in them, for
thoſe to feed upon) as the Evangelift *Mark* expreſſeth it,
chap. 9. 4.

Being *caſt into hell*, denotes the unexpectedneſs and
unwillingneſs of Diſciples to come thither. Diſciples
deſire and expect to go to heaven; they ſeem to them-
ſelves new made and fitted for heaven; they live not as
the reſt of the world, and little do they think to go with
them into miſery. They look to be welcomed into hea-
ven; little do they expect to be thruſt back and caſt into
hel; yet unleſs they be truly formed and fitted by God
for himſelf under their diſpenſation, this muſt be their
portion: This is the portion of the ſtrictest Jew, notwith-
ſtanding all his ſacrifices; and this will be the portion of
the ſtrictest diſciple, notwithſtanding all his laying hold
on the righteousneſs of Chriſt, unleſs all be purged out
of here, which the worm, and the fire in hel is prepared to
feed upon, and conſume hereafter.

VERSE 31, 32. *It hath been ſaid, Whoſoever ſhall put away
his wife, let him give her a writing of Divorcement.*

*But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever ſha'l put away his wife,
ſaving for the cauſe of fornication, cauſeth her to commit
adultery: and whoſoever ſhall marry her that is divorced,
committeth adultery.*

There

THere was liberty given in the Jewish state to put away their wives with a Bil of Divorce, and they that did to, were not transgressors in, and by, the light of that dispensation of the Law: But in the light of Christ it is otherwise: The light of Christ discovers a further restraint in the nature of the Law, about this point, though God was pleased thus to dispence with the Jews therein. Christ therefore teacheth, That he that thus putteth away his wife layeth before her a snare of committing adultery, and may be the occasion of anothers committing adultery with her, as he that afterwards marieth her doth, so that both these are adulterers, and he himself too, if he marry another, as is further testified by the Evangelist *Luke*, in his relation of this passage, *chap. 16. 18*. For the one, without sufficient ground in the nature of causes, thrusting his pro, or wife out of his bed, seeking another himself, and exposing her to seek the bed of a stranger, and a stranger taking unto himself the proper wife of another, here is adultery committed on every hand. So that here is a direct sin against the nature of the Law by all these, as the light of Christ will manifest, though it could not be charged upon the *Jews* as sin, according to the dispensation of the Law of *Moses*. There is only one case excepted, which is *fornication*: For other causes, there can nothing happen which love and wisdom may not conquer, or grace sanctifie: But this is a breach of wedlock, a breach of the bond, and so Christ alloweth it as a sufficient ground of separation. This changeth her from a wife into a harlot: Hereby she maketh her body, which is peculiar to her husband, common to another; nay she maketh her members the members of another, according to that reasoning of the Apostle, *Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot.*

VERS. 33. to 38. *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.*

But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is Gods Throne,

Nor by the Earth, for it is his Foot-stool: neither by Hierusalem, for it is the City of the great King.

▼ *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

But let your communication be Yea, yea: Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more then these, commeth of evil.

SWearing was allowed of old, so as a Man did swear in truth, performing what he swore: So that only for-swearing was condemned by the former interpreters of the Law. But Christs forbids all swearing in ordinary communication (for so it is restrained, ver. 37.) though it be truly: and that either by one thing or other. He giveth divers instances with the particular reasons of them: The sum of them all, seems to be this. Every thing belongs to God, Man hath power over nothing, not so much as over an hair of his head, and therefore it becometh him not to be slight in the use of any thing. Besides, what ever a Man adds over and above a plain affirmation or negation, which is sufficient, commeth from an evil root, proceeding at best from the froth and vanity of his Spirit, if not from worse.

This is not to be understood universally, but only in way of ordinary communication: for otherwise, in divers cases, swearing is appointed by the Lord, and is proper for satisfaction and determination of controversies. Indeed in the World, or from Disciples in reference to the World, there may need more: but among Disciples in whom there is the true nature and life of

Christ,

Christ, yea, yea, and nay, nay, may very well suffice ; and the desire, expectation or use of more there, cannot be from a good root. Their yea and their nay from the truth and righteousness of their nature, is of more validity (and should be of such esteem with one another) then all the oaths which can proceed from the nature of man. So that by this injunction of Christs, I am not forbid to swear any oath, which the Magistrate or any else may call for from me as a man, in this state or relation wherein I now stand, to whom both the letter of the Gospel, and the Spirit of Christ, teacheth me to fulfil all righteousness, whereof my oath is a part, for my yea and my nay cannot justly be expected to be of such value with them, as it ought to be with those who discern the nature of it in the true light. Neither is swearing by an extraordinary Spirit forbidden here, which shall one day be brought forth by the light and power of the Gospel. *Jerem. 4. 2.*

VERSE 38. TO 42. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth.*

But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

THE Law alloweth satisfaction in case of wrong. It is just under the Law, that there should be a recompence for injuries. There is a desire of it in the nature of Man, and there is equity in that desire. Man naturally would not do wrong; and if he did he would repay it: and therefore he may justly also desire to be repaid in case of wrong offered him. But it is not so in the

life of Christ: The outward precepts thereof teach not to turn again, nor doth the inward nature.

I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but who so shall smite thee, &c.

Christ would have his Disciples so far from retorting evil, that he would not have them so much as to hinder it in its current upon them, but to take it in fully and freely, faster then it is offered: To be more ready to be afflicted, then the World is to buffet them: To be more ready to part with what they have to the World, then the World is to take it from them: To be more ready to be bent to the service of the World, then the World is to bend them. He would not have them fortify and strengthen themselves against the invasions of this world, but lie open to its assaults. The wisdom of Christ teacheth him to become the fools and slaves of the World, to lie open to their malice, without so much as seeking any shelter from them. Surely this must needs be very harsh and difficult to all but those who are taught not only to beleeve, but also to suffer. These were sufferings of the nature and life of Christ, and none but the nature and life of Christ can undergo them. The life of man can never rise up hereunto, but it is very easie and natural to the new life. The old man cannot do so, and the new man cannot do otherwise. He who hath strength of life enough in him, may live at this rate: but man cannot but maintain his own being, which this is contrary unto: This is such a strain of mortification, as is beyond the power of man to learn or imitate.

VER. 42. *Give to him that asketh thee: and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*

HE that doth lie open to receive all the injuries of the World, cannot be unkind to the wants of the World,

World, such is the love of the nature of Christ, that it cannot retain any thing in its own possession, which the nature of another wants. There are two cases wherein a man (much more a Disciple) is to be open handed.

First, in case he know the need of his brother. In this case he is to be very free and liberal in lending unto him, as is earnestly pressed, *Deut. 15. 7, 8, 9.*

Secondly, in case he know not, yet he is to *cast his bread upon the waters*. Love will teach him to part with somewhat upon a venture, towards the relief of another, though it be not certain that he doth want. If he himself were in necessity, he would not be content that every one should bind up their hands from him, who did not certainly understand his need.

The life of Christ convinceth that we are but stewards of these things, teaching to distribute them to others, and so stil turns us towards such objects: but our own selfish nature causeth us to turn from such, which Christ giveth warning to take heed of, *and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*

VER. 43. *Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

THis is the Law of corrupt man: yea there is a root for it in the present state of nature, which man feeling, with a kind of necessity of it, and equity in it, so understandeth and interpreteth the Law of God. He reads his exposition of the Law, according to what he finds in himself. It is true, in nature, love draweth out love, and enmity, enmity. There is both love and enmity sown in nature, and thus nature teacheth to distribute it, love to ones friend, to ones neighbour, and hatred to ones enemy. And indeed it is in a sort necessary for self-preservation, as the state of things now stands: for na-

ture knoweth not either how to conquer another, or how to secure it self by love: And if it did, yet could it be neither willing nor able to suffer so much, as is requisite thereunto.

VER. 44. *But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

THis Law (of loving your neighbour, and hating your enemy) is not the Law of the life of Christ; This is not the rule or will of his nature, that teacheth not to answer enmity with enmity, but with love. There must not be enmity in your Spirits towards those, in whom there is enmity to you; but ye must love them. The love which is in the life of Christ, is not kindled nor doth it remain, or act from things without, but from its own nature: and so it is not at all quenched by any enmity that it meets with. Christ doth oppose wicked men and Satan, only in the way of his own sweet nature, but not from any root of enmity; for he loveth them in the midst of his opposition. Or thus, the enmity that is in Christ and his seed, against the Serpent and his seed, is not from such a root, nor of such a kind, as the enmity of the Serpent, and his seed against him is; and therefore doth not deserve the same name. Christ doth not any thing from a sharp and evil nature, from a nature of enmity; but the sharpest passages of his towards his greatest enemies, come from the sweetness and love of his nature.

Love your enemies.

What a work hath poor man, with his own heart, to express kindness to an enemy? But who can so far conquer the enmity, which is stirred up in his own heart by the malice of his enemies, as truly to love them? Yet the

the nature of Christ in his seed, doth as naturally receive this precept, as the nature of Christ doth naturally give it out to them; and love towards their enemies doth as naturally flow from them, as enmity doth flow from their enemies towards them. All the sweetness and goodness in God cannot allay the nature of Satan: and all the sourness and wickedness of the nature of Satan, cannot in the least alter the nature of God; so much as towards him. Thus it is in God the root, in Christ his image, and in all the seed. *Love your enemy* saith God to Christ, and Christ to them: and their hearts answer, O God, we cannot but love them, thy life, thy nature in us constraineth us to love them.

Blesse them that curse you.

The World or the Spirit of man, is an enemy to the life of Christ, and cannot but curse the Disciples of Christ. Now the humane Spirit being touched with an injury, would presently retort and curse again: but the nature of Christ cannot do so, but in stead thereof blesseth. It wisheth well to that which wisheth ill to it, and by the others opening its fountain of bitterness, it is only provoked to open its fountain of sweetness. All the malice of man cannot so much as draw an ill wish towards the person of any man (even in this their weak and corrupt estate) from the life of Christ, from him that is a Disciple of Christ, so far as he is and acts like a Disciple.

Do good to them that hate you.

The World is not only an enemy, but it will still be acting enmity: it will be conceiving and expressing hatred, it will be doing of harm to those who are the true Disciples of Christ. But the Disciples of Christ must never answer them in that way, but still be doing good to them. All the evil turns which the Disciples of Christ can meet with, must never incite them to return the least evil turn again; but only occasion from them the doing

more good, even to those from whom they receive ill. A fountain can never be incited to send forth streams, contrary to its nature. A good tree cannot but bring forth good fruit.

And pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.

The World useth the Disciples of Christ with despite. They will do them mischief upon no just ground, but upon meer malice; and in cases wherein they do themselves no advantage at all, nay perhaps they prejudice themselves: And this is all the pleasure they can have in it, in that they satisfy the enmity of their own natures. He that is spiteful, will hurt himself to hurt another: will hazard the loss of his own name, to ruin the name of another: will sink the ship wherein his own goods are, to do another a mischief. Thus are many injuries done to the Disciples of Christ, from meer spite: Such kind of cruelties and sufferings are they exercised with, as arise from meer spite. When the root of the Worlds enmity is once kindled, it groweth stark mad against the life of Christ.

And they do not only use a Disciple despitefully, when they light upon him: but they persecute him, they hunt after the life of Christ to wreak their malice upon it.

Now if the Spirits of Disciples might be turned against any, surely against these: yet towards these must they retort no evil, but do them the best good they can, they must pray for them, pray for the pardon of this their ill usage, as Christ did, *Father forgive them*: and Stephen, *Lord lay not this sin to their charge*: and pray for the change of their natures, which makes them thus evil at present, and which will lead them into such misery hereafter. Prayer notes the seriousness, the solemnity, the truth and fulness of the desire. What a man truly prays for, he doth desire from his very heart. He that doth indeed pray for those that despitefully use him, and persecute

cute him, cannot have the least rising in his Spirit against them: for it is not prayer, unless it be from and according to the heart.

O how sweet was the temper of Christ toward the despiteful Jews! and it cannot but be the same in those (even in the same case) who partake of the same nature with him. But who now of a truth doth find this nature! who from the naturalness of his Spirit, doth immediately upon the receipt of an injury, from his very heart, desire the good of him who did it? We perhaps take a great deal of pains to reason our selves into it (and it is well if we do so) and yet still we find it far from us, which argueth it to be a thing forced upon our Spirits by outward impressions, but not a natural plant.

V E R. 45. That ye may be the children of your Father, which is in Heaven: for he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth Rain on the just, and on the unjust.

HE which is in Heaven, is your Father. They that are the Disciples of Christ, they who have the life of Christ in them, have God to their Father. God is the Father of that life which is Christs, and therefore must needs be the Father of them in whom it is. Now if they be the children of God (as the Disciples of Christ pretend to be) they have the nature of God in them, and cannot but move and act according to that nature. Now thus God acteth, *For he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.*

The Lord in the dispensations of the things of this World is free, is good to all. He doth not cause his Sun to rise only on the good, or send rain only to the just, his goodness doth not flow toward things according to
their

their nature, but from his own nature, and so it extendeth universally, as well to the evil as to the good, as well to the unjust as to the just.

Indeed the Lord hath hereafter a recompence for the good and righteous, and a punishment for the evil and unjust: But that ariseth not from any enmity in him, but from the truth, righteousness, and excellency of his own nature, which there is somewhat in thine (thou who art his child, and hast the same nature) to joyn with him in; insomuch as it cannot but please thee, when the Lord bringeth it forth. It may seem harsh now (at a distance) to thy tender spirit, but when it approacheth, and thou seest it, it will suit the very inmost pleasure of thy soul: *The righteous shall rejoyce, when he seeth the vengeance;* Little doth the righteous think what joy he shall have in beholding the vengeance of God upon the wicked. But in the mean time thou must act with the same nature, and after the same manner as God doth now (if thou wilt approve thy self to be his child) who will not be provoked by their evil and injustice to withdraw his sweetness and goodness from them: But whatever they are, and whatever they do, they shall know and feel that he is good. No evil of the creature can put God out of the course which his own native goodness inclines him to; but he is good, and he will do good, and that universally.

VERSE 46, 47. *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more then others? Do not even the Publicans so?*

T Here are two things which life eyeth in its motions. The one is, the proper native excellency of them, or the suitability of them to its own nature, that they be such as spring from, and be proportioned

to the measure of its own life: The other is, that they meet with that reward which is proposed to them, that they be not short in themselves, nor so managed as to fall short of the price set before them. Thus Christ, and all the Saints have fixed their eye upon the Crown, have stily eyed the recompence of reward, and so steered all their motions, that none of them might fall short thereof. And therefore this is a very proper consideration, not suited so much to the spirit of man, as to the life of the nature of Christ, *what reward have ye?* And this is as proper, *what do ye more then the Publicans?* If ye return love for love, salutation for salutation, one kindness for another, this is no other then is usual among the worst sort of men. If this deserve any reward, the *Publicans* may lay claim to it as well as ye. The life of Christ in the motions of it, is both of a more excellent kind, and hath also a further reach at a greater reward, then the motions of the life of man can aspire to. The life of Christ is of a deeper nature then the life of man (as his spirit is deeper then mans spirit) and moveth more deeply, so that it leaveth the spirit of man behind it in its motions, desires, aims, and attainments. It thinks that it hath not acquitted it self like it self, that it hath done nothing in any kind, if it hath not done more then either man doth, or can do. *What singular thing do ye?* as Christ saith at another time. The nature of Christ is a singular tree, and cannot but bring forth singular fruit, such as no Publican, no sinner, no natural man, no not the most artificially renewed can attain to; whereof this is one parcel, namely, to love, to salute, to pray for, to do all manner of good unto such as are enemies, even while they are acting hatred and malice against it.

VERSE 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father, which is in heaven is perfect.*

BEcause ye look for a compleat and perfect reward; be ye therefore perfect, bring forth fruit of a perfect kind, fruit that may be meet for to receive such a reward. To be good and kind to them that are so to you, this is such a fruit as floweth from poor weak, imperfect nature: The lowest sort of men can be thus; the lowest sort of men, the very Publicans, can do thus. But to have an heart full of sweetness and goodness to them that are ill, and do ill to you, and so deserve ill from you: For you both to wish, and promote their good cordially, this is a strong and perfect kind of motion, and argueth a strength and perfection of nature within. He must have a nature like Gods (yea the very nature of God) who thus is, who thus acts. Why thus your father is; this is the nature of him which begat you; thus the nature, which he hath begotten in you, is, and acts in him: Let the same nature grow up, attain to, and come forth after the same manner of perfection in you. Ye are children of God, ye have the same life with him, therefore move like him too; do not fear to tread in the same steps of perfection, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

This argues a wonderful strength and perfection of life and nature thus to be, and thus to act. To have all ones motions spring from within, from ones own inward principle, and not to be moved either this way or that way from occurrences without. This is a taste or shadow of, yea just such a kind of perfection as is in God. Gods goodness is of a perfect kind, and he is perfect in it; for he cannot be stopped by the evil of any thing, from doing good

good unto it. His goodness is very weak, which is drawn forth or stricken back by things from without. This is the excellency of nature to be, and act from it self, because it is such. *Thou art good, and doest good: The whole earth is full of thy goodness. If I descend to hell thou art there,* and what is God doing there (but like himself, according to his nature) good? This perfection the Disciples of Christ should aim at: They have the same nature with God, they look also for the same reward which his nature now enjoyeth, and therefore they should set about bringing forth the same fruit; *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect.*

AN
EXPOSITION
ON
MATTHEW
CHAP. VI.

VER. I. *Take heed that ye do not your almes before men,
to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward with
your Father, which is in Heaven.*



Very one is a *Steward* of what ever he hath. We have neither outward nor inward things of our own, or for our selves meerly; but to dispence to such as have need of them. The treasures and fruits of the earth are not to be hoarded up by a few for their own pleasure and benefit, but to be improved and managed for the good of mankind. The World consists (at least in part) by a mutual Law of dispensation, throughout the whole fabrick of it. When that Spirit springeth up, which knoweth the true bounds of propriety and community, the State of the World will soon be changed.

Those in whom the life of Christ is, though they have other kind of things chiefly to dispence, yet they must not neglect the distributing of these also; when they have them. They must give *Alms*. Christ doth not here impose it upon them, but takes their doing of it for granted, only directeth them how to do it most spiritually
and

and advantagiously. *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them.*

They must not do it in the eye of man, or at least not with this aim, to have it taken notice of by man. The motions of this life, come from a principle suitable to themselves. They who are spiritual, move from their own nature, and they regard approbation and justification from their own nature only. He who moves spiritually in any thing, moves because it is his nature, and because it is the will of his Father, who is the proper and skilfull guid of his nature. He properly inclines to what he knows to be good, and to what his Father (who understands it better then himself) prescribes him. He cannot do any thing to have man commend him. Man cannot see the excellent nature and strains of his life, while they are thus involved within a vail, and hid in a mistery: and those which are obvious to mans eye, he is also so far to hide, as the manifestation of them may prove dangerous to his own Spirit.

Otherwise ye have no reward with your Father which is in Heaven.

Those motions in which ye are not spiritual, ye lose your reward. If ye aim at any thing besides the satisfying of your nature, the pleasing of your Father, and attaining of the reward which he sets before you; If ye turn aside toward any fleshly end, either to please man or your own corrupt selves: such motions God regards not, he will not own, nor can he reward. Those motions, which so turn aside toward corruption, have not a spiritual root, but shew whence they came, and a spiritual reward doth not appertain unto them: that which they are to inherit is *corruption*.

Therefore saith Christ, *when thou dost thine alms, do not make a shew of it, as the Hypocrites do, ver. 2.*

VER. 2. *Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a Trumpet before thee as the Hypocrites do, in the Synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.*

HE is an Hypocrite, at least so far, who desireth to have his good deeds taken notice of by men: And this is the best of the reward, he is like to meet with, namely, the oblation and commendation of men. The best fruit that wicked men reap from that corruption, is herein in this life: the reward thereof hereafter, will be of another nature.

VER. 3. *But when thou dost thine alms, let not thy left hand know, what thy right hand doth.*

A Disciple should not act any thing from such a Spirit, nor after such a manner, nor with an eye at such ends, as the hypocritical Spirit of man doth. Do thou it as secretly as may be. Hide it, if it be possible, even from thy self. Have no glory, no esteem, so much as from thy self for it. Let thy reward be wholly in future; Leave it wholly to God.

VER. 4. *That thine alms may be in secret: And thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.*

THis is the true way to the reward of God. The Lord now hideth the excellency of this life, the excellency of the motions of it; This is the season thereof: But one day he will open the true worth of it, and then he will openly reward it.

The

The duration of this World, is a seed time. There is a promise made to all the fruit of the Spirit, which is sown therein. Every thing that is done from the nature, and according to the rule of this life, shall at last be rewarded. But now, as the life is sown secretly: so it is also appointed to move secretly. Its *alms* must be secret, its *prayers* secret, its *fastings* secret. It comes and steals into the World, and so it steals along through it, and steals again out of it; and the World little knoweth what it doth here; or hardly that it was here. Indeed it is to bring forth a greater life, a greater excellency; even in the common affairs of the World, then the Spirit of man can attain: but it is not to make any great noise: It is not to cry, or to lift up its voice: The great strains of its life must be inward, between God and its own Spirit. And these, how little soever they are now heard of, or known in the World, shall all be one day fully taken notice of by God. This World is not in that sense a vain thing, *viz.* to appear, and so to pass away: but all that hath been done in it, is to be ripped open, and judged in the presence and by the light of the Lord. Every one must give an account of the things done in the body: And then he that can approve himself a true *Few* in his nature, in his life, motions and operations, shall have full praise and glory from God, with the full reward of all that he hath been and done.

And thy Father which seeth in secret,

Every child hath a Father from which his nature came, and to which it is proportioned. The Disciple of Christ, hath his Father which is God. Every sort of Disciples take God to be their Father; but he is the only true and natural Father of the true Disciple of Christ: yet he eyeth not only his own children, but all others also, even in those things which they do most underground, most secretly. It is the delight and glory of the Lord, to ob-

serve

serve and bring forth to view, what is done in secret.

Which seeth in secret. There is nothing done in secret, which God seeth not: And he seeth it not in vain, to let it slide away as if it had not been; but he observeth it, he writeth it down, and will make every eye see and read it. This will be the great glory of this life at last, O how excellent hath it been in secret! How excellent hath the inward nature and inward motions of it been! Its secret righteousness, its secret humility, its secret purity, its secret truth and integrity, its secret breathings after the true life, power and glory of God, with its secret testimony to the truth of his nature and dispensations, O how precious are they! It is black, it is clothed with sackcloth so far as the Worlds eye can go: but in secret, in the inner part of it, it is wondrous rich, it is all glorious. The life of the World, that appears gaudy: but could one look in the secrets of it, O how filthy, how black, how unrighteous is it there! The greatest glorious appearance of man, shall not be able to hold up its head, when the secrets of it are opened. But such is the present estate of things, that that which is a lie, that which is not makes all the shew as if it were: but that which is the truth, that which indeed is, makes no appearance; but keepeth it self hid both in its nature and motions, in so much as no eye can behold it, but that which can peirce into the secrets of things.

Himself shall reward thee openly.

sprakes Christs speak here much of reward, and presseth much from the consideration therof. It is the main thing in mans eye: and therefore taking that from him, he cuts him to the heart. But that's not all: for he doth not only take it from hypocritical man, but he seriously inciteth and quickneth the Spirits of his Disciples thereby; and therefore doubtles it hath a spiritual force and vertue in it so to do. To eye or desire the reward is not simply carnal

carnal, but only then when it is done with a carnal eye and heart. The Spirit of Christ proposeth the same thing to the Spirit of man, and to the seed or nature of his own life, and both take them in, and make use of them severally, even according to their own nature and principle, and so they come to differ in their nature and use, according to the difference of the principle by which they are received. To move contrary to ones nature, merely for reward, without either desire toward, or delight in the motion, this is grossly carnal: But to move from a spiritual nature, both toward the thing, and toward the reward, this cannot be accounted carnal. The life of Christ cannot but desire to obtain the crown of its own spiritual nature, and of every spiritual motion. As the rewards of this kind of life are spiritual, so they cannot but truly touch those Spirits with desire after them, who truly discern them. A spiritual Crown cannot but inflame a spiritual heart with heat of desire. It was no small advantage to the life of Christ in himself, nor hath it nor can it be any small advantage to the life of Christ in his Saints, to fix their eye upon the reward. He that will run for a prize, must keep it in his eye and thoughts, continually quickning his Spirit by the sight and remembrance of it. God did not undervalue the life of Christ by setting the price before him; nor did Christ undervalue the excellency of his own life by observing it, and quickning himself by the sight of it: And therefore Christ doth not disparage his Disciples by putting them so often in mind of the reward.

This reward shall be from God himself. It shall be a very full one, even such an one as shall become God to give with his own hand. Yea and God will give it *openly*. God will justify the value and desert of this reproached life, in the sight of Heaven and Earth. Every eye shall behold the Crown, wherewith this life shall be crowned

by the hand of God, and ſee it wear it. Here is encouragement enough to lie ſtill, to lie hid quietly and contentedly: It is no matter for the Worlds diſcerning or acknowledging your piety, your devotion, your integrity, your righteouſneſs, your ſweetneſs, meekneſs, patience, &c. let them run under ground, ſo as no eye but the ſecret eye of God can eſpy them; God will in due time open the true worth of them, and proportion out the due reward unto them.

VER. 5. 6. *And when thou prayeſt, thou ſhalt not be as the Hypocrites are: for they love to pray ſtanding in the Synagogues, and in the corners of the ſtreets, that they may be ſeen of men. Verily I ſay unto you, they have their reward.*

But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret, and thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

THis ſame direction concerning prayer, is the ſame in ſubſtance with the former concerning alms-deeds, with the ſame caveats, and upon the ſame ground.

VER. 7. *But when ye pray, uſe not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do. For they think that they ſhall be heard for their much ſpeaking.*

Here is a further caveat added concerning prayer, which relates to a vanity therein, which the Spirit of man is very apt to fall into, and was already in uſe among the Heathen. The caveat is concerning vain repetitions, which Chriſt bids his Diſciples take heed that they ſuffer not their Spirits to run out in. This might become the Heathen: (Chriſt may very well intend the

Scribes

Scribes and Pharisees here under that little, for they knew not God, as elsewhere he chargeth them with making long prayers after an *Heathenish manner*. The *Heathens*, who knew not the nature of God, or the proper use of prayer, might easily slide into this vanity: but it doth in no wise become a Disciple or Christian, who should understand the nature, end and use of all his motions.

Vain repetitions. To repeat the same thing over and over again, as if the doing of this were of efficacy for the attainment of their requests: whereas it is not the multitude of words, but the strength of Spirit which prevails with God. And from thence a repeating of the same thing again and again, is not a vain repetition, but an effectual repetition, or a repetition which proceeds from an effectual root. The motions of a nature of Spirit enlightened and guided by God, cannot but prevail with God. And thus we know *Christ* repeated the same prayer, *Father if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me.*

But the *Heathen* repeat things over and over again and again vainly, without any true life moving in their Spirits, and that from a root of extream vanity; as if the saying of many words (or of words often over) were acceptable and available with God. *For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.* This is the custom of the *Heathen*, they lay the stress, not upon the truth of their life and nature, but upon the multitude of their motions, which yet have no manner of vertue in them, further then they are right in their kind, and rightly guided.

VER. 8, *Be not yee therefore like unto them: For your Father knoweth what things yee have need of, before yee ask him.*

YE have a root of a better life in you, and therefore ye must not imitate the *Heathen*. They act vainly, to no purpose, from no true root or ground, but the vanity of their own imagination; and to no other end, but the venting of that vanity: And ye shall see it will all come to nothing, what ever they think of it: therefore *be not ye like them*. This practise, in the ground of it, is foolish and Heathenish, therefore do not ye imitate it.

Nor is there any need of your speaking the same things often over, as if God knew them not: for he knows your wants before ye signify them by your asking. It is by his knowledge of them that ye come to pray (if ye pray aright) but it is not by your mentioning of them in prayer, that he cometh to know them. The end of prayer is not to make things known to God, and therefore do not manage it as if it were so. It draweth forth your nature, it maketh further impressions upon your nature, it is a very fit and proper exercise for you; ye by the flowing forth of your spirits after this manner, come to feel and understand your wants better (and to have your hearts better prepared both to wait for, and to receive and improve the goodness of God) but God hath the knowledge, and sense of them before.

The truth is, *prayer, fasting, nay beleeving, waiting, hoping*, yea all manner of *knowledge or practise*, is Heathenish, except that which ariseth from, and is guided by the Nature and Spirit of God. The *Jews* looked upon all the world to be *Heathen*, but Christ could discover the *Jews* themselves (the very *Scribes* and *Pharisees*) to be *Heathen*, and all their observations and exercises of Religion to be Heathenish. When the Lord cometh forth with his light, with the candle of his Spirit to search our Spirits, then we shall know who are Heathens, and what is Heathenism.

VER. 9. *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven, &c.*

USE not many words, but a few comprehensive words, wherein the strength of your spirits may go forth. Speak not words, but things; or many things in few words. Wrap up much spirit in a little form of words, or in a small bulk of flesh. Let your life, let your heart speak, and not be drowned by the multitude of words. As ye have in you an understanding spirit, and pray to one of understanding; so pray understandingly.

Here is a pattern of prayer, such a copy as none can write after, but they who are taught by the same spirit. The Heathenish Spirit of man doth not know what use to make of this prayer, unless he should say over the words of it, which is grown a little too gross for the light of this age. O Lord God, what darkness hath encompassed us? Thou hast taught, but we do not know how to learn to pray. Who prayeth after this manner? who knoweth what this means, to pray after this manner?

Here are four things wherein Christ instructeth his Disciples concerning prayer. *First*, how they should address themselves to God, or with what manner of eye they should look upon, namely, with a child-like and reverential eye. *Secondly*, what their spirits should breath after? what they should desire of God in prayer? as namely, *the hallowing of his name, the coming of his Kingdom, the doing of his will, their daily provision, the pardon of their offences, and preservation from snares and sins.* *Thirdly*, upon what ground they should desire and expect these things from God, which is not only because they are his children, placed in an estate and condition by him wherein they have need of these things, but also because he sits at the stern disposing of all these

things, bringing some of them about, and distributing others of them as he pleaseth, his is *the Kingdom, power and glory*. Fourthly and lastly, after what manner they should vent or utter the desires of their spirits, which is after such a brief spiritual vigorous manner as is here specified, and not in the multitude of words, which are apt to drown the life and motions of the spirit. When the spirit is full, it desireth to bring forth it self in a few fit words (which the spirit can teach it:) but multitude of words ariseth from mans folly, and is an enemy to the nature and wisdom of the spirit.

Now all these things are natural to the child, and the nature of the child easily sucketh in the light of them from the nature and illumination of the spirit: (but man can never be taught them, though he maketh a greater noise about them then he who hath learnt them.) It is natural to him to look upon God as his Father, and to eye his Majesty in his approaches to him. (Remember *Abraham* who was the typicall Father of this life, how freely and yet how reverentially he addressed himself to God.) It is natural to him to ask all these things of God, Christ can no sooner mention any of them, but he finds the desire in his soul, in his spirit, in his nature: which Christs naming of them doth but awaken, and make more visible to him. He doth not learn to pray from these words of Christ; but from his own life and nature he knoweth these words of Christ to be a true instruction. As particularly concerning that request of the pardon of sin, it is a thing which his heart doth. He knoweth himself to be a sinner, and bring him all the reasons in the World against begging pardon (as that they are already pardoned, and therefore it is now improper) yet he cannot but do it. And he will be found to walk aright, following the sence of his own nature, which is a true light, when man in the midst of the subtilty of his own reasonings

reasonings about these things, will be proved but to have wandered. It is also natural to him to eye this ground, and to bring forth his requests after this manner.

Our Father which art in Heaven.

The Disciples of Christ, (or the children of God) should address themselves to God as to their Father, as to one who is nearly related to them, being the original of that life wherein Christ and they live, as to him from whom they came, as to one tender of them, and ready to hear them (as the Father is the Child) as to him on whom they depend, as the child doth on the Father.

Our Father. He who begat us, from whom we proceeded, to whom we belong, who naturally taketh care for us. This is a sweet manner of address, exercising that principle of life which is in the child.

Which art in Heaven. The Disciple is not only to look upon God as a Father: but also to eye his Majesty and greatness. This is a proper object for the child, both to teach him his distance (for who should more acknowledge the Fathers honour then the child !) and to raise in him a spirit, and nourish in him an expectation and confidence of great things, suitable to his birth and parentage. Gods being *in Heaven* denotes his glory, his fulness, his being above al, his having the command of all, his disposing of al things as well as of his children. Every thing on earth is weak, is low, it savoureth of the earth in its nature, state and motions: but he which is above, he which is in Heaven is strong, is high, is great, and can do great things. The majesty, the greatness, the magnificence, the power of the Lord, is known by his house, by his court, by his place of residence. Were not the Lord very great, he would not become Heaven; and were he not very mighty, he would not be able to keep it.

Hallowed be thy Name.

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This is the moſt natural deſire and delight of the child, the exaltation of the Fathers honour. *If I be a Father, where is my honor?* It is moſt natural to the child to have an honorable eſteem of his Father, and to propagate the honour of his name. A child cannot endure any reproach caſt upon his Father, but it lights more heavily upon him, then if it were directed againſt himſelf: *The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me.* It was the great work of Chriſt to honour his Father, *I honour my Father, and ye diſ-honour me.* When he gives an account of his whole tranſactions, he gives it thus, *Father, ſays he, I have glorified thy Name:* and it is alſo the whole deſign and work of all who receive the true nature, life and breath of Chriſt. This is the ground of all the following requests, they deſire *the coming of his Kingdom, the doing of his will, their own proviſion, pardon and preſervation*, becauſe all this tends to the advancing of their Fathers name. Their Fathers name is engaged in all theſe, and will ſuffer much if any of theſe things fail.

The name of God is that whereby God diſcovereth himſelf, and is made known: It is the ſignification of his nature. As every creature hath that in his nature, which comprehendeth a name for it: ſo is it alſo with God. The love, the wiſdom, the goodneſs, the greatneſs and excellency of God, that is his name. That which is, that which is it ſelf, that which is good, that which is perfect, &c. that is God. Now God hath a double name (as I may ſo ſay) a more common name, whereby he is diſcerned by the old creation, by the ſpirit of man and the creatures; and a more peculiar name, whereby he is made known to the new-creation, to the ſpirit which is of himſelf in Chriſt. He hath one name fit for the nature and ſpirit of the World, and another name fitted to the nature and ſpirit of his own. The Lord,

Lord, though he is one, yet he hath several names, fit to exprefs the feveral things in him, to the feveral natures to which they are to be expreffed.

Now the name of God is prophaned here in this earth, both his common name and his peculiar name. His common name is ufually named in vain, and his peculiar name is a miftery, a derifion, and a scoff. That which is magnified here on earth is the name of man. Man talks indeed of honouring the name of God, but the real honour he fhews, is to his own name. The wifdom of man, the goodnefs of man, the greatnefs of man, is acknowledged, admired, and fought to by man: but who is it that truly knows, seeks after and trusts in (even in a common way) the wifdom of God, the power of God, the goodnefs and greatnefs of God? Alas all mans hallowing of the name of God, is but a prophaning of it: Man hath loft the truth of his nature, and how can he do any thing in truth? But that which the child is to defire, is the true honour of his Father. That his Father might have the glory, and the fulnefs of the glory of his name. That he might be known and acknowledged, both in the World and amongst his Saints, according to the truth and fulnefs of his nature. That all truth, life, being, perfection, and happinefs of all kinds might appear to be in him, to flow from him, and yet to abide with him. That all Idols might vanifh, and all their names be put down, and God only appear, as he only is. That there might be no life or enjoyment in the Church, no nor yet in the World, but from and in, and with the name of God through Chrift. That the anointing, in its variety, might be all and in all. That all other glory and excellency (in all the kinds and degrees of it) might fall, and the Lord alone be exalted. That the Lord might once fhine fo in his worth and beauty, that all other excellency might hide its

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head or fall down before him. The children of God have a sight of the name of man, that they loath: yea the very name of God, as it is in the heart, and cometh forth from the lips of man, is not lovely to them: but yet they know another name, a name of another nature, then the creature ever heard of, which is a very comprehensive name, it is *one name*, it taketh in, discovereth and expreſſeth his whole nature, life and being. This is the name of God, which when it is once hallowed, will bring forth perfect life and blessedness. It is impossible for the heart of man to conceive what the child means, when he saith to his Father, *Hallowed be thy name.*

V E R. 10. *Thy Kingdom come.*

G O D hath a *Kingdom*, in which He, his Son, and his Saints are to reign together. Wherein *righteousness*, *peace*, *love*, *joy*, and all manner of spirituall excellencies and delights shall grow up and flourish, shall be in the possession of, and in subjection to all in this Kingdom. There is such a Kingdom to come, but it is not yet come. This Kingdom is at a great distance, there is not so much as a smattering of it to be perceived in this World. The life which is to reign, is in captivity and subjection. Though the Kingdom be in it, it is hid within it; it is not, it cannot come forth. God is in this World, God is among his Saints, but he doth not reign, but doth rather subject himself to man and Satan. So that now is mans Kingdom, Satans Kingdom, sins Kingdom; sin reigns, Satan reigns, man reigns; but the Kingdom of God is not come. But yet there is a time for God to set up his Kingdom, and this his children breath after: that he might rule every where, that that wherein he is to reign, and will reign, and cannot but

but reign (when ever it is brought forth) might be discovered: that the territories of God might be brought forth upon the stage of this World, and he might set up his throne there, and take his place in it: that nothing might be done any more, but what God doth by his own Spirit, according to the Law of his own life: that God himself might govern all his Saints; all men, all Angels. O Lord God, every Kingdom hath appeared but thine, when shall thine come also! Then thy name shall be hallowed, when thy Kingdom comes: for though hitherto other Lords have had dominion over us, yet then will we make mention of thy name only.

Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in Heaven.

O how excellent, how lovely is the will of God! All would be well, had but this will its current. Were there not another nature sprung up, another will, another course, there could not be this torrent of misery. All things are well in Heaven, where Gods will rules: all things are perverse and tending to misery here on earth, where Gods will is at least neglected.

The will of God is not done, that the heart of the child feels, and his tongue acknowledges. If there be but a few rayes of it cast forth in any dispensation, O what clashing there is in the spirit of man against it! Nay if God do by perswasion or force bring man to do the thing which he wills, yet there is no bringing him to do it according to his will. O what contention hath there alwayes been between the Spirit of Christ and man (in all dispensations and throughout all ages) about the will of God! The Spirit of the Lord grones and mourns to see every thing go so contrary to him. For as it is mans Kingdom, and Satans Kingdom: so their will is fulfilled; and the will of the Lord, so far as ever it comes forth, is thwarted. The whole state of affairs here on earth, is a direct crossing of the will of God. But this is

that which God hath in design, to crush all other wills, and give scope to his own will : to have every motion answer his own pleasure. When he sets up his Kingdom, he will bring forth his will : when his *Kingdom is come, his will shall be done.* And this is that which the very heart and soul of the child prays for, this is his daily request, *thy will be done.* Man cannot pray this from his heart. He can only utter the words of it, not speak the spirit of it. He cannot desire either the coming of the Kingdom, or the fulfilling of the will of God : for in that there is the death of all that he is, desires, or hopes for.

In earth as it is in Heaven.

Here the child expresseth *where* and *how* he desireth that the will of his Father might be done. He would fain see it done here on this earth, where it is so much opposed ; and as it is done in Heaven. It is done in Heaven already : In Heaven there is no rule but the will of God : The will of God is the only square of all motions there : The Nature of God is there manifest, and his will in it, which orders every thing there. O let it be so here too, saith the natural child of God ! And ô how sweet would this earth be, and the blackest thing in it, might but the nature and will of God once take place here ! If the nature, life and will of God did but once spring forth in his Saints, and overspread the earth, how sweet would this earth be ! It might even compare with Heaven it self. But how can the will of God be done in the Kingdom of darkness, in the corrupt nature and spirit of man ! When the Kingdom of God comes, then will his will be done ; after both which the spirit of every true Disciple most earnestly breatheth.

VER. 11. *Give us this day our daily bread.*

THE time of the several dispensations in which the seed are set, under which they are exercised, and wherein they are to act their parts on the stage of this World, is with them to day. (*To day if ye will hear his voice*) And there is a portion of food allotted for their spirits in this day, which their present condition needeth, and which (from the sense thereof) they are to beg of their Father. They must not yet have the Kingdom (though in a type they have had it once and again) but bread to nourish them up to eternal life. This is it they are to breath after for the present. God teacheth every creature to desire his food, and so he doth them, to desire their food. But that which they are to desire for the present is not dainties; not the feast to satisfy them, but bread to sustain them. We endanger our spirits, when we breath after a present possession of that, which is not now but hereafter to be enjoyed. That we should seek after, and rest contented with for the present, is bread. But this is the present lamentable condition of the seed, *they want bread*; they cry in the streets for hunger, but find not that life, that *Manna* which their souls need. The Father who cannot but provide bread for the child, yet can exercise his child with hunger and want of bread. They want bread in respect of the life which they desire, and in respect of the hunger which they feel; but they have as much as is requisite for them under the present exercise. That which is to dy, must not have bread: and that which is to live, hath bread sufficient for its present dispensation, though not to its own sence. They have bread enough to maintain life in the pit, though not bread enough to maintain any rate of life openly in the World. Hear this state or case opened by that spirit which understood it, *Isa. 51. 14. The captive exile haste-*

neth that he may be loosed, and that he should not dye in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. Those which have ability may search whether the words may not more aptly and naturally be rendered thus, *He hasteneth the captive exile that he might be loosed, and he shall not dye in the pit, nor shall his bread fail.* This is most certain, the tenderest Father (in whom is the very nature and spirit of tenderness and love) cannot suffer his dearest child to want what is proper and necessary for him in any condition. When he asks his bread, his Father cannot deny him or give him a stone, though to the judgment of his weak sence he often doth both. As the child cannot but ask, so the Father cannot but grant, though the motions of both in this kind, are many times so mysterious, as neither the World nor their own spirits can read them. This is the main thing the child asks for himself, bread, bread for his spirit, though as he hath also an outward nature, so he also looketh up to his father, to take care of, and make provision for that too. But that which he most needs is bread for his spirit, it is his spirit, the nature, which he hath from his father, which he most minds, and that Christ teacheth him to pray for: so that that is here mainly intended, though the other be likewise comprehended.

V. E. R. 12. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,*

THE seed are now under a dispensation, and they are continually offending in it. They run in debt unto God every day, both by falling short of, and transgressing the Law of the present dispensation. Who ever found himself so strong, as to be able to walk with God perfectly in any of his paths? The spirit is not always willing (for that also is subject to distempers;) and

and yet when it is , the flesh may be weak : So that though to will be present with us , yet how to perform we know not. Though *that which is born of God sinneth not* ; yet they in whom the seed and birth of God is, cannot but sin , through the present infirmity of their own flesh , and the sharp assaults of their powerful enemies. *If we say that we have no sin , we deceive our selves.* While we are under the Law of any dispensation , we cannot but be obnoxious to sin. But if we acknowledg our sin and desire pardon , he is merciful and just to blot them out according to his promise. And as it is the will of God , so it should be continually our desire to him , to blot out our debts. It is not a formal request , but that which the very heart , the very soul of the child saith to the Father. *Forgive me my debts.* It is against my will , is contrary to my nature , Dear Father forgive me. The soul of the child is afflicted , and mourns over every miscarriage against his Father , and he begs the remission of it with his soul. He cannot endure himself because he hath done it , and he cannot endure to think that the guilt of it should lye upon him before his Father. The shame and confusion for it is so great upon him , that he cannot look on the face of his Father , unless he may read his pardon there. Nay when he doth look , he looks with watery eyes , and with a sad heart , which abide upon him , until his Father pleaseth to wipe away his tears , and to revive his drooping spirit by the warmth of his love and tenderness. The foolish spirit of man , when it hath conceived and brought forth a lofty apprehension , makes a mock of sin : but the child , in whom is the true nature and the true light , in the most illuminated and most understanding part of his spirit bewaileth it , and beggeth the remission of it.

As we forgive our debtors. This is a strong argument to the Father to move him to forgive , and to the child

to beleeve its pardon. He that hath taught us to forgive, will not he forgive us? Can we find a readines in our spirits to remit the offences of others, and can we possibly imagine that God can want it? Certainly he that hath wrought this in us, hath also left it remaining in himself. He to whom God hath given a spirit of forgiving, who cannot but forgive those that offend him, may well expect to reap the same measure from God, whose nature engageth him more to forgive his children, then any nature derived from him can teach any to forgive such as injure and provoke them. He who findeth this wrought in him, hath strong ground to beleeve, that God himself cannot but bear the same temper of spirit in himself towards him, which he hath wrought in him towards others.

VER. 13. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

THE poor weak child doth not desire trials, though when it seemeth good to the Father to exercise him therewith, he submits, only desiring strength from his Father, to enable him to acquit himself as becomes his child. The child is in an estate of weakness in this world. (It is the condition of all the seed that is sown here.) Though he findeth the true life and nature of the Father in him, yet he findeth it weak, and not able to guide him aright in this entangled state. He continually wants the wisdom, the strength, the manuduction of the Father. It is easy turning aside, but hard walking even in so narrow a path. The flesh is ready to catch at every bait, and will easily swallow it, if it be not very narrowly watched. Now the child hath none to preserve him but his Father, he hath none else to look towards, none else to trust in (*Preserve me o God, for in thee*

thee do I put my trust, Ps. 16. 1.) and alas what shall he do, if he which is his only defence and guide out of dangers, lead him into that which will make him fall: therefore he cannot but pant to his Father, to consider his weakness and not try him beyond his strength.

Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil.

It is a very sensible request. He who knows the child, may read his very heart and soul in it. Father, I would fain live with thee, I would fain walk with thee, I would fain be like thee in my nature and motions. I am very weak, ô do not put too hard trials upon me! Do not entangle me in snares, but disengage me from them. Deliver from that evil which they lead to.

There is a great antipathy between the child and evil, God is good, and from the root of his goodness his children spring, which siteth them at the most perfect distance from evil that can be. This nature or temper all the body of Christ, have from Christ their head, that they love righteousness, and hate iniquity; and accordingly this is the great request, which they put up to God in reference to themselves, that he would preserve them from it, and from that which leads unto it: (for he cannot truly desire to avoid sin, who doth not also desire to avoid the snare.) It is a bastardly spirit, which upon any consideration whatsoever, can be content to become one with sin. The nature of the child is different from, yea contrary to the nature of sin, and there is no reconciling them. What argument can be of force to unite antipathies? The furthest that the child (or this nature) can be brought to in this respect, is to be content to become sin; to let sin seize upon him, and pass through him, and he die under it for the Fathers pleasure and honour: (I do not now speak what or how things will be to the child, when he is passed through

the inmost veil into the full being and glory of the Father, but how they are with him in his passage, and further at present I have no desire to look.)

Now as there is a great antipathy between the child and evil: so there is a great connection between sin and temptation. A weak nature can very hardly grapple with a strong temptation and come off cleer. The only hope of the child is in the Lord. If it were not for the Lord, his heart would sink at the approach of every enemy, and at the sight of every danger. Now if the Lord, who only can deliver out of temptation, lead into temptation; what shall the poor child expect? And yet the Lord in his wisdom may lead his children into temptation, he can lay a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence in Sion, yea his Spirit can lead his own Son into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. The Lord can send his own word to his own people, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken, Isa. 28. 13. But although the Lord be wise, and can and will bring good out of evil, yet the poor weak child (according to his nature) cannot but dread evil, and intreat his Father to consider his nature, and not lead him into such snares, as should involve him in it. For the annexing of that clause, *but deliver us from evil*, (*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*) is a correction or mitigation of the former request. The child doth not pray absolutely against temptation, but only in relation to that evil to which it tends. Were it not for sin, he would not fear or seek to avoid any trial. Let his Father but assure him that he will keep him free for the evil of temptation, and he will not be unwilling to be led by him into temptation. But this is the great liberty of the life to be free from sin, and it cannot possibly endure to

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be again entangled in it; wherefore it most naturally and vigorously prayeth to its father for preservation from it, and from all such temptations as conduce unto it.

There is one thing more which would be taken notice of in these petitions, which is this: The child prayes not for himself alone, but for the whole flock or body of Christ. There is a spirit in every member which not only unites to, but also desires and delights in the good of the whole. There is a natural good will to, and a natural care of the whole, in every particular member. It is as natural to every member to be joyned to, and to have a sense of the whole body, as it is to it to be a distinct member. Every child, every member, prayeth for bread for all, for pardon for all, for preservation for all. That is not a true member (or at least not in its right natural temper) which hath not a sense and doth not heartily desire the welfare of the whole.

For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.

This is the ground why the seed of God expect all from God, and beg all of God, because as they themselves so all else are his. As their nature which desireth thus and thus, is from him; and as that which he desireth, is according to his will: so it is in the power of his nature and life to fulfil all their desires. He can cause his own Name to be hallowed, his Kingdom to come, his will to be done: He can supply them daily with bread, forgive their sins at present, and preserve them from sin for ever; for his is the Kingdom, power and glory for ever. To whom should the true nature (which rightly desireth these things) address it self for the effecting of them; but to him who hath the Kingdom, the power and the glory? They appertain to him, and it is proper for them to desire and expect them of him. So that here is a

ground proposed before God from his own nature and state, why he should satisfy the desire of his child in all these fore mentioned particulars, which doubtless have vertue in them to move God, (for what is natural and strong from him must needs have power with him) as also to establish their faith, hope and expectation. When I can see the very nature of God engaged of it self, to supply and satisfy what my nature wants and desires, it cannot but much incourage my spirit to beleieve hope, and wait for it.

Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

The Kingdom is the territories of the God-head, the Region or country wherein God lives and reigns, wherein he and he alone hath the dispose and command of all. This Kingdom comprehendeth all things: There is nothing whatsoever which is not within the limits and reach of it: There is no other Kingdom which is not in subjection to it. So that this is *the Kingdom*. Others are Kingdoms respectively, or comparatively. This absolutely. He hath universal authority who hath this Kingdom. From this Kingdom all other Kingdoms issue, and pay homage to it.

The power is that ability or strength, which dwells in him who rules the Kingdom. It is that whereby he manageth the Kingdom. It is that from which the Kingdom did flow, and by which the Kingdom is, and subsists. It is a power suitable to the Being, Nature and Condition of the Kingdom. It is the Fountain-head and universal comprehension of power. There are many other powers, as well as other Kingdoms: but this is the spring, the continent, the very spirit of all powers, from which all powers flow, in which they are contained, and to which they are subjected.

The glory is that which flows from the nature of God, and

and from the ministration of his Kingdom by his power. There are many glories besides (which arise in and unto other things from their natures, relations, qualifications, motions, &c.) but this is *the glory*, unto which all other glories vail. This is the *Sun* from which the *Moon* and all the *Stars* attract their brightness; and in the presence whereof they cannot shine. All other glory comes from this, all other glory belongs to this, all other glory is drowned and swallowed up by this, and can have place no more, further then it can enter into and live in this.

That the Kingdom the power and the glory are Gods; and only Gods, may appear yet further by these following considerations.

1. The truth the substance of these (which alone is the thing) is Gods and only Gods; The true and substantial Kingdom, the true and substantial power, the true and substantial glory. That of these which is to be seen among the creatures, is not the thing, but only the shadow. So that the creatures leave both these things, and the names which appertain to them, appropriated to God. The Lord preserveth that which is his own, distinct from the creature, and the creature cannot intermeddle with it. Indeed the shadow of these things may be said to be the creatures, (in such a sense as things may be called the creatures) but the substance is Gods.

2. That of these which is in the creatures (or among the creatures) hath but a little time to be, which time is nothing before God. A little while ago and it was not, a little while again and it is no more. Alas, God overlooks, he reckons not on this present moment of the creatures; nor can any else make any thing of it, whose eye is indeed upon that which is eternal. The Eternal Kingdom, the Eternal power, the Eternal glory, was and is, and will be inseparably in the God-head, *Thine*.

is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever. Thy Kingdom, thy power and thy glory, is for ever; and that Kingdom power and glory which is for ever, is thine alone.

3. That of these which is in the creatures (or among the creatures) is not while it is. Its being is so weak, so fading, so empty, that it is no being. Its Kingdom is no Kingdom, its power no power, its glory no glory. The whole state of the creature in all its changes and variety, is *nothing, less then nothing and vanity*, before the substantial fulness of the Lord. Alas that of these which makes all this shew among the creatures, is only from that of these which is in God, which this vain appearance for a season covers, but yet it is but a vain appearance, and so (in the judgment of that which is true and substantial) is not, even while it is.

4. That of these, which is in God, is while it is not: is the same in it self, in its truth, in its substance, while it is not in appearance. Mans Kingdom, the Kingdom of the creature, the power of the creature, the glory of the creature, is never awhit the more for all its blustering, nor is Gods ever the less for being under a veil. The one passeth away, and so it is not; yea the very eye of the creature shall seek it, and shall not find it. The other springeth up from under its thick covering to take its own place, and to fill this vast emptiness of death and vanity, with its own abundance of life and truth. And to this let every thing that hath the breath of the life of God in it, say *amen*. Let every one whose sense is touched by the same Spirit, burst forth with the sweet finger of Israel, *Thine O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the Majesty: for all this is in the Heaven and in the earth; in thine abine is the Kingdom O Lord; and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over*

over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all, 1. Chron. 29. 11. 12. And again, All thy works praise thee, O Lord: and thy Saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy Kingdom, and talk of thy power. Thy Kingdom is a Kingdom of all ages: and thy dominion throughout all generations, Psal. 145. ver. 10. 11. & 13.

VER. 14. 15. For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.
But, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

CHRIST here adds a reason of that passage in this prayer, which would stick most with the spirit of man. To desire God to measure out forgiveness to us as we forgive others, may seem very harsh. This is rather to pray against pardon, than for pardon. Man cannot pray thus, but he must pray against himself: for he is not able to forgive. So far as he seemeth to do it, he doth but strive after it from outward apprehensions and principles, but he cannot do it naturally. Forgiveness groweth not in the state of this present nature of man, nor can it be learned by man.

This prayer indeed is not for man, but for the disciples of Christ. The rule of this prayer (*to be forgiven, as they forgive*) would undo man, but it is very safe for them: for there is a perfect forgiveness in the life and spirit of Christ. The true child of God, the nature of Christ, doth truly, doth fully forgive. It would not have any man or thing suffer in the least, for all the harm or mischief which it hath done to him. It would have wrath and severity measured out by perfect judgment, and in perfect love, with an entire aim at the good of that on which it seizeth, and not with any reference of
satisfying

satisfying it by way of revenge: (It is as unnatural to the sweet nature of Christ to desire revenge, as it is to the sower nature of man to forgive.) It hath the same nature here on earth with its heavenly Father above; and therefore it forgiveth here, as he doth there. And it desireth no other of him, but to forgive it, as it is taught by him and practiseth to forgive.

And this is most equal, that he who would be forgiven should forgive; that he who would have God freely and fully forgive him, should himself freely and fully forgive his brother. It is a most unrighteous and vain temper in the spirit of man, to desire and seek revenge for every injury from man, and yet to think that hee himself should be freely forgiven by God. But Christ tels him he shall miss of his aim, (who ever he be) for God requires his debts of him, who exacts his of another. Him that forgiveth, will he forgive: and he that forgiveth not, shall be held guilty by him. The Disciples of Christ, who pretend never so neer a relation to Christ, and dependence upon Christ, and assure themselves of hope of pardon from God through him, yet if they have not this new forgiving nature and spirit in them (and do not faithfully exercise it) shall not be forgiven. *The Lord will not hold him guiltless,* (among any sort whether of *Jews or Christians*) *who taketh his name in vain.* Shal that be saved by Christ, which hath not the nature, which hath not the life, which hath not the Spirit of Christ in it? He that calleth vainly upon the name of the Lord, shall he be saved? He that doth not love forgiveness, (for then he would forgive) shall he be forgiven? No saith Christ *if ye* (be ye never so strict Disciples, never so close followers of me) *forgive men, then will your Heavenly Father forgive you,* and not otherwise. Your relation to me as Disciples, nay, your relation to God as his children, will not avail you,

you, unless this nature be, and upon occasion put forth it self in you. Your Heavenly Father will not forgive your trespasses, if ye forgive not men theirs. That parable is worth the remembring, where the Lord called his servant to account for his debts, after he had forgiven him. There was a forgiving under the Law upon sacrificing, and there may be a forgiving under the Gospel upon looking up to Christ in a way of believing, these are several ways of pardon under several dispensations, but both these will vanish before the Eternal judgment, and that person alone will be justified there, whose nature, spirit and course, is justifiable to the Nature and Spirit of the Lord. He alone shall be justified, who is to be justified by the true rule, and by the true measure. Not hee who justifieth himself by any rule or square whatsoever, but he whom the Lord justifieth, he and he alone shall be justified. Then the true Jew, the true Disciple shall have praise of God, and place with Christ. Then he who hath truly forgiven, shall receive the true remission.

VER. 16. *Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast: Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

Fasting was of great use in the legal administration of the Jews, and of especial injunction: and may also be still serviceable in the dark administration of the Gospel. Fasting is useful for the keeping down of the body, yea and for humbling of the Spirit, it fitteth both for humiliation and prayer. And *the Bridegroom being taken away*, it may be very requisite, so far as it is useful hereunto. But yet being but a bodily exercise, it hath very little worth in it, further then it is serviceable to

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higher ends. No man should observe a fast out of form, but only make use of it so far as he finds it advantageous and helpful to further matters. Yet man, in this slavish state, may perform this action slavishly, without any great prejudice or dis-honour to him. But doubtless such an observation and use of it, or of any thing else, is beneath the life and excellency of man, much more beneath the life and excellency of Christ.

In fasting or observing of fasts, man carrieth it very absurdly, even like an Hypocrite, who doth it formally, without true life and understanding. He will be sure that day to look sadly, he will carry the matter so, that men shall take notice of it. And men in observing it, will commend the zeal and piety of this man, which is the best fruit he is everj like to see of it. All those things which he aims thereby to obtain from God, shall come to nothing: all that he shall gain, is this commendation from man. He shall not have the approbation of God, or the reward which the life prosecutes in these exercises; but this shall be the reward of his fleshly aim. It is in him a fleshly exercise, fleshlily carried on, with a secret fleshly by-end in it (aiming at honour and praise from man) and shall have this fleshly reward. He shall be honoured, and esteemed by man, a pious man, a devout man, an holy man, a man that much dedicates himself to the seeking and serving of God.

But Christ will not allow his Disciples to be thus, or to do thus. He will not allow them this end in their fasting, or this manner of their fasting. They must not aim at praise from man, or manage any of their Religion so as to obtain it. Fast they may, but they must not fast like the Hypocritical spirit of man, which cannot but desire to justify and approve it self to man. *When ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad countenance, &c.*

VER. 17. 18. *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint
thine head, and wash thy face.*

*That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father
which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret,
shall reward thee openly.*

CHRIST adviseth his Disciples, when they intend to fast, to manage it after another manner then hypocritical man doth. Not to expose it unto, but to hide it from the eye of man. To anoint their head, to wash their face. Not to leave it dirty or disfigured on purpose, but rather to make it more pleasant and lightsome, that this exercise of life (for so it is in them) may be hid from man. These things are to be done to God alone, and therefore are so to be managed, as God alone may take notice of them.

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, &c.

CHRIST would have the peculiar motions of his life hid from the eye of the World. Their life is from God, from him, and to him, it is to move, to him it is to appear and approve it self; but not to the World. It concerns not the World to know when thou prayest, when thou fastest, or when thou givest alms: therefore thou art to avoid making a shew of it before them. Indeed what thou dost in their view, thou art to honour thy life by doing excellently: but those secret things which are to pass between God and thee, thou art not to make a vain glorious shew of before man. And by this means thou having had no reward in this World, neither from man, nor from thine own fleshly spirit, treasurest up rewards to thy self with God, who will open the nature and worth of all these secret motions, (part whereof consisteth in their secrecy) and reward them in

publique view, *And thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

VER. 19. 20. *Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where theeves break thorow and steal.*

But lay up for your selves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where theeves do not break thorow, nor steal.

CHrist dissuadeth his Disciples from seeking of this World, from treasuring up the things of this world, and adviseth them to store up treasure of another nature.

Every man hath some kind of treasure. With some men their estates, with some their relations, with some their honour, with some their parts, either of body or mind, are their treasure. Estate or goods may be chiefly here intended, for they are most liable to the *moth, rust, and thief*: and they also are the most gross and common treasure. Mony or monies worth is that which most men seek after and hoard up.

Christ undervalueth this treasure by the danger of its loss, which also sheweth the meanness of its nature. What should a Disciple of Christ do treasuring up of that which may so easily be defaced, corrupted, or taken from him? Seeing he knoweth eternal life, and an eternal nature, he should be treasuring up things of that life, and of that nature.

The treasure of every thing should be sure to its own Nature, Spirit, and Estate. That which is of the earth, may treasure up in the earth, and things of the earth: but that whose descent, whose habitation, whose conversation, whose expectation is not here, but from and in Heaven, should treasure up things of that nature,

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and lay them up in its own country. How secure may the Disciples of Christ be of all their spiritual riches, the riches themselves being of so enduring a nature, and the receptacle or treasury of them so strong and safe? No *moss*, no *rust*, no *thief*, nor any such thing can approach to impair or imbezile any of this treasure. The treasure of this World cannot be preserved, but must perish first or last, with the spirit which treasureth it up: but this Nature, this Spirit with all its treasure, shall live with God for ever, in that Heaven from which it and all these things proceeded.

Now every motion of a truly Spiritual Nature and kind, is a laying up of treasure with God, a sending of a stock to Heaven to God to dispose of there: For God calleth for these things with promise of reward, suitable to their nature and worth. He therefore who performeth them according to the will, and in the life and Spirit of the Lord, still maketh an addition to the treasure which he hath in Heaven. He that doth any thing spiritually, *soweth to the Spirit*; and all the seed which he soweth, he shall reap. As he that doth any thing carnally, soweth to the flesh: So he that doth any thing spiritually, soweth to the Spirit. And as he that soweth to the flesh, soweth to himself death, wrath, and corruption, which he shall most certainly reap: So he that soweth to the Spirit, soweth to himself life, love, and immortality, and all his seed shall he reap. He shall reap all that life, all that love, all that immortality (with its perfect growth) which he hath sown in any spiritual motion or action.

VER. 21. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

CHRIST further driveth home this counsel of his, by shewing the danger of having a mans treasure on earth.

earth, and the advantage of having it in Heaven. So much of his treasure as is on earth, so much of his heart is there. It cannot be treasure, if the heart be not with it: If therefore a mans treasure be here, his heart is here. The desire of a mans heart, the delight of his heart, the love and thoughts of his heart are with his treasure. A Disciple should have no treasure at all in this World; His life is hid with Christ in God, and all the motions of it so fast as they come forth, should be sent to Heaven, yea they naturally mount up thither of themselves; and as for his relations, honour and estate in this world, (or what ever else he hath or can have of this nature) they should have no place with him. He should love them as if he loved them not, and use them as if he used them not, desire them as if he desired them not, and delight in them as if he did not delight in them. He is a miserable Christian, to whom any thing is dear but Christ, who doth not even in the midst of his enjoyment either of Father, Mother, Husband, Wife, Child, Estate, &c. hate them. His love to Christ (he who is a true Christian) is so great, that his love to these deserves no less, then the account and name of hatred in compare with it.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

My Son give me thy heart. There can be no true union, where there is not a conjunction of hearts. If a mans heart be not with God; his hope, his inheritance cannot be there. It is a very dangerous thing to have the heart on earth: yet if the treasure be there, to be sure the heart will be there: for a mans heart cannot but be with his treasure. It is from the nature, love and delight of his heart, that he maketh it his treasure. And as it came from his heart, and is placed by his heart; so his heart cannot but abide with it. The tribe of *Levi*, who belong to the Lord, who are the Lords portion, are to have

have the Lord for their portion alone, yea they can have no other portion; They cannot have a portion in the things of this World. There is a voluntary poverty, which floweth from the nature of the life in the seed of God, and they cannot be rich in this World. Though it were possible that all the World might be at their dispose, yet they could not enjoy it, or treasure it up; for each of these must be done with the heart, and their heart is by its own nature placed elsewhere, and cannot be drawn hither. What a deal of pains do many (who go for Christians) take to draw their hearts from the earth, and to raise them Heavenward? and yet all will not do, but still they hang downward, and will not mount upward. What is the reason of it? Is it not because they have treasure on earth, but are not rich toward God? If thou hadst not treasure on earth, thy heart would not be kept on earth, but would run off from it toward thy treasure. And if thy treasure were in Heaven with God; thy heart would run thither of itself. Thou should not need such tugging with thy self, thy heart would naturally have recourse to, and easily and constantly abide with thy treasure, yea there would be no severing of thee from it: *for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

VER. 22. 23. *The light of the body is the eye: If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?

Christ here, under a parable, openeth the state of all mankind, shewing from whence, and how their misery or happiness groweth upon them.

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The light of the body is the eye.

It is *the ey* which containeth light for, and conveyeth light to the whole body. The Lord who made the body, hath made the eye to be the light of it.

Thus it is in the soul or mind, there is an ey which is the light of it also. There is an eye which receiveth in light, and conveyeth light to the whole mind, in so much as the mind can have no more light, then what it receiveth in by this eye.

If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

If the eye be the light of the body, then according to the state of the eye, is the light in the body. If the eye be sound, if the eye be well, all the body hath light. If there be no imperfection, no impediment, neither by nature nor accident in the eye, the body is full of light, the body hath a sufficient supply of light for all the uses and services of the body.

Thus it is likewise in the mind. If the eye of the mind be cleer, be sound, be single, be entire, having true light in it unmixed and unobstructed, the whole mind is full of light. That man hath light throughout all his mind for all the motions of it. He is in the light, he lives in the light, and he walks in the light.

But if thine ey be evil, thy whole body wil be ful of darkness.

If there be any thing in the eye to disturb it, it hindereth the sight thereof, and prejudiceth the whole body. If there be a beam or mote in the eye, how can it see? But if the eye it self be naught, how far shall the body be from light then? The whole body in such a case must needs suffer with the eye, and be full of darkness with it, or because of it.

Thus is it also with the mind. If there be any mixture in the eye of the mind, it cannot see cleerly, the mind must needs be dark: but if the eye be evil, if the eye it self

self be dark, there can be nothing but darkness in the whole mind.

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.

If the eye of the body be dark, how dark is the whole body? And if the eye of the mind be dark, how dark is the mind? Yea the darkness of the mind (and the danger therefrom) is greater than the darkness of the body: because the body is of a narrow and inferior nature to the mind, and is also more sensible and suspicious of its danger than the mind is. It can with more ease see its need, and provide it self of a guide, then the mind can. The higher the nature or principle is, the more it needs the light and help of an eye, and the deeper thicker and more prejudicial is the darkness of its eye. Now because these considerations are so weighty, I shall raise two points or observations from the words, wherein I shall impart my apprehensions and sense concerning these things.

Observ. 1. *That where the eye of mens minde is evil, all their light is darkness.* Men may talk of light, of principles of light, and think they see beyond all others (as the *Pharisees* here did) and yet there be nothing but darkness in them. The *Heathen* in the midst of all their knowledge of Philosophy and wisdom, the *Jews* in the midst of all their knowledge of the Law, were but dark. They had both evil eyes in them, and how could they possibly see aright in the things of God? For the better understanding hereof, let us enquire into these three particulars. 1. What darkness is? 2. Who are dark, or who may be said to be dark? 3. What are the effects of darkness?

1. *What is darkness?*

Darkness is the absence or obstruction of light. It is either the want of an eye, or of light in the eye. Thus

in every kind of things the want of that eye which is proper to that kind, or of that light which is proper to that eye, is darkness. Or thus, darkness is either a want of a true eye or light in its kind, or the setting up of that which is not true in the stead thereof. Thus in the natural state of the World, in the natural mind of man. No eye, no light, or a painted eye or light in stead thereof, is darkness. All the false principles or reasonings in the mind of man, are darkness. Thus also spiritually, no eye, no light, or a corrupt eye or light, is darkness.

There is a great deal of light with men, which is darkness with God. While the truth appeareth not, every counterfeit may go for it. Every man's eye may go for a good eye now; and the light of it for true light. But the Lord knoweth things at present; and when he shall please to bring forth the truth, that will make manifest that that is not it, which all sorts of men take for it. The Lord alone hath the true light, with which he alone shineth into the hearts and spirits of his own, and all other sorts of light are but of mens or Satans painting.

2. *Who are dark, or who may be said to be dark?*

Satan and man in their fallen estate are darkness, and in darkness. Satan is the root or principle of it, and he hath breathed it upon man and covered him with it, so that his eye is now also become evil, and cannot see good. Man in that estate which is now natural to him, and in all his changes up and down in it (yea even in those which he thinks to be changes from it) is nothing but darkness. The *Heathen* is dark, and the *Jew* is as dark as the *Heathen*; and the *Disciple* is become as dark as either. Every sort of men turn up and down in their divers and several strains of Religion, in veins and principles of darkness. Man is naturally void of the light of God, and whatever he receiveth in, still he remaineth dark. Let him take in never so many principles of light, he doth

doth but increase his own darkness. Let him read the Scriptures, perform what duties he will, enter into what form of worship he will, &c. the more he growes in light there, the more he growes in darkness: For his eye being dark, until God make a new eye in him, he cannot know light.

3. *What are the effects of darkness?*

The effects of darkness are darkness throughout. That which attends a dark eye, is an whole body full of darkness. He is in darkness concerning himself, in darkness concerning all his actions, in darkness concerning all that befalls him; in darkness concerning his present state, in darkness concerning his future end. He knoweth not what he is, what he does, or whither he goes. He may apprehend all the e in that which he calls light, but he is truly in the dark concerning all these: He doth not know God, he doth not trust God, he cannot love God, (though to his own eye and in his own light he doth) but is ignorant of him, declineth and hateth him. He doth not move towards God, as he judgeth by his eye, and with his light, but from him, &c. But more particularly take notice of these five following effects.

1. *The impurity of the heart and of all the wayes.* This is such a necessary effect or companion of darkness, as cannot be severed from it. As light purifies, so darkness corrupts. *Without knowledge the mind is not good.* O what unclean spirits are there every where in men who are not purged by the light of God, and how unclean are all their wayes! Read the description of dark man, *Rom. 3. ver. 10. to 19.* The *Pharisees* (or the strictest sort of Religious persons, whom they represent) who seem to abound with light, and to be very much cleansed (inasmuch as they appear nothing like the rest of the impure World,) yet being but dark in the nature of their Spirits, are still sepulchers full of rottenness and

corruption, though very curiously painted. All the filthiness on the face of the earth, cometh from darkness. It were impossible the heart of any man, or the waies of any man should be so impure as they are, did the light of God dwell there.

2. A second effect of *darkness* is, *enmity to God, and all that's good*. Whence is it that man hates God and every thing that is truly good? Is it not meerly from his darkness, which not only corrupteth his heart, but also blindeth his eyes? It is impossible to hate God, or any thing that is good, in the light. It is impossible to love God, or any thing that is good, in the dark. Where every thing is misrepresented, how can good appear good? Where the eye is blind, how can it see? And where the heart is out of frame, how can it judge or act aright? In the dark there is not so much as the fear of God, (*Rom. 3. 18.*) much less the love of God before mens eyes.

3. A third effect of *darkness* is, *Universal deceit*. In the dark a man knoweth nothing, but is deceived about every thing. Here the great Jugler hath full scope and advantage enough to cosen in every thing, and who can secure himself here from any of his deceits? As no lye can abide the light, so no truth dwels in darkness. There is no spiritual truth of God, which there is so much as any true glimmering of in this dark World. The earth and the state thereof, Heaven and the state thereof, mortality, eternity, &c. are only known in the light. That which dark man apprehendeth concerning these things, is not the truth. So that dark man is deceived about God, Christ, the Scriptures, Ordinances, Duties, and al other spiritual things: yea about all others (though he will be venturing to judge them) and about himself too, not only about things past or to come, but about his very present estate, about his present light and course.

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The dark imaginary mind of man is not a true understander of any thing.

4. A fourth effect of darkness is, *Destruction and misery* to the vessel in which it is contained. There is both present and future death and misery in every dark nature, and in every dark motion. As light saves the vessel in which it dwells, leading unto life and happiness: so darkness destroyes, leading unto death and misery. It cometh from death and misery, it is death and misery in it self, and it leadeth unto further death and misery, even unto utter darkness, where perfect death and misery reign. *Destruction and misery are in their wayes*, Rom. 3. 16. All the waies of dark man lead to destruction and misery; and in every step they step therein, they move towards it.

5. The fift and last effect of darkness here to be mentioned, is this. *The dark man bringeth all that he loveth* (so far as it accompanieth him) *into destruction and misery with himself.* It is natural unto man to be teaching, guiding and leading others. *Every fool will be babling.* There are few so blind, but think they see enough to direct others. There are few so much in the dark, but that still they seem to themselves to have light enough to be guides to some others. This is the whole course of this present World, *The blind leading the blind, and the blind following the blind.* But Christ hath read the doom of them both: They shall both tumble into the same pit of destruction and misery. *If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch.* Thus much for the first observation; The second followeth, which is this.

Observ. 2. *He whose light is darkness, is the wondrous dark man.* The more light a man hath, if it be not true light, the greater is his darkness. A man that hath abundance of false light in him, is dark to purpose. The ordinary man which is meerly ignorant, is a poor man,

a weak man in darkneſs: This is a ſtrong man, a rich man, a man which hath great poſſeſſions in the Kingdom of darkneſs, which may be evidenced by theſe two conſiderations following.

Fiſt, He hath all the darkneſs of the ignorant ſort: for he truly knoweth nothing of God, no more than they. A man by having never ſo much falſe light, is not advanced thereby to one dram of true knowledg. He hath only a vain appearance of truth, whereby he is rather the worſe, but no whit the better.

Secondly, He hath alſo, beſides this, a more accurate darkneſs than the common ſort of dark perſons are capable of, namely a darkneſs which he calleth light, which is as it were a treaſury of peculiar principles and practiſes unto him. Wherein there are theſe three things included.

1. This man hath a peculiar ſtrain of wickedneſs in his heart and life, or rather many peculiar ſtrains of wickedneſs, according to the nature and variety of his light, or rather darkneſs. He hath peculiar polutions and corruptions, peculiar paths of abomination, ſpiritual roots, principles and waies of filthineſs, which others are not acquainted with, nor capable of. A more notable way of Idolatry and Spiritual Adultery than others can reach. O there is no ſinner like to him whoſe light is darkneſs! *Judah* that corrupts the light of God, is viler in ſin than *Egypt*, *Sodom*, or *Samaria*. They do not only juſtify others; but commit greater abominations. He who ſins by the line of his light, muſt needs be more accurate and vile in ſin (according to Gods meaſure, though it is excellent holineſs and devotion with him) than he who ſins by the common principles of darkneſs.

2. There is a peculiar deſtruction and miſery attending him. As he walks not in a common way of ſin and wickedneſs,

wickedness, but in his own peculiar track: so he hath his own peculiar destruction and misery, in which he ends. He shall not dye the common death of man, but that which his own darkness leads him to. He shall dye his own death, and into his own chamber in Hell. It shall be easier for *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, then for *Jerusalem*, who hath corrupted her light, and whose light is darkness. Wo to you *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, *Hypocrites*, wo to you that have your own light in you, wo to you who have created a new kind of darkness in your selves out of Gods light, which ye will still have called Gods light, Gods truth, Gods will, though it be of your own forming: ye shall receive the greater condemnation. That Spirit of Christ which condemned the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in their day of apostacy and dissimulation about the things of God, will find out a greater condemnation for you. As the light that ye pretend to is greater, so is your darkness; and so will be your condemnation.

3. Hereby this man walks on most certainly and confidently in this his way of wickedness, unto this destruction and misery. As his ruine is the greatest of all, so he runs on most headlong into it. He cannot possibly miscarry or fear destruction, for this wherein he walks is light, and leads to happiness. Ali how can he escape death and misery, whose very light leads him to it? He that knowes nothing, may easily be drawn to doubt; but he that walks on by his light, who can startle him? He doth all manner of wickedness, and wipeth his mouth saying, I have done no harm; He justifieth it by his light. Take notice of any man that setteth up light in any kind, how he justifieth himself, and condemneth all others by it? The *Jews*, who did set up their interpretation of the Law, and observation of the Sabbath, &c. how did they approve themselves thereby, condemning

demning Chriſt and his Diſciples? And ſo now a dayes, they who ſet up any way of Prelacy, Preſbytery, Independency, Anabaptiſm, Seeking, &c. or of any more inward, ſpiritual, and myſtical way of knowledge, worſhip, or praſtiſe, how confidently do they walk on in theſe ways themſelves? and how confidently do they judg by theſe? But ſuppoſe all theſe prove darkneſs, as the way of the *Jewes* ſtrictneſs did. The ſpirit of unclean man may take up his reſt or habitation in any of theſe, and polute it. The ſpirit of man may live in all theſe, and the Spirit of the Lord may live out of all theſe. And if it ſhould indeed be ſo, where art thou then, O man, whoſe life, whoſe Religion, whoſe light conſiſts in any of theſe? The life of God conſiſts not in any outward or inward form of knowledge or worſhip (no nor yet in receiving, either by a way of revelation, which the fooliſh nature of man ſo much gasps after) but in a new nature, though that new nature cannot be excluded from, but can receive in any knowledge, or walk in any form of worſhip, when the Lord leadeth it.

Uſ. 1. See whether perſons be ſo much to be blamed, for being ſhie of ſuch knowledge, ways, and praſtiſes as they have found in the World, or have fallen into, they know not how; but only as they have been educated and principled. There are not many of them (though ſo much cried out of) who ſtand ſtill and look ſeriously about them, being wary of what they receive for light, and of what they take up for a truth or way of Gods. And indeed it is very difficult to do it truly and faithfully. The ſpirit of man loves to be ſetled: Preſently it falls out of one way into another: but to ſtand ſtill, acknowledging it ſelf to be at a loſs, not knowing which way to ſtir, and ſo praying for the light and guidance of God, and waiting his pleaſure, not pretending to
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any such thing in the mean time, this is death (very terrible death) to the spirit of man.

Uf. 2. *Take heed that the light which is in you be not darkness,* (this use Christ maketh of it, *Luk. 11. 35.*) If it be, the whole body is full of darkness, and ye are quite out of the way in all the motions of it. All your purity and cleanness is corruption: All your fear and worship of God is detestable with him. And the more ye abound in these, the deeper shall your condemnation be: ye take but pains hereby to find a more miserable place in Hel, then man can ordinarily reach. Nothing can be acceptable with God, but what comes from a pure principle (from true light) in its kind: it must not come from such a light, as is not light in truth, but darkness.

O how foolish is vain man! Man is for the most part idle and careless, minding neither his God, nor his soul: and when he is industrious in these things, he looketh not to his bottom, but setteth up any thing for light, even what cometh next hand; and he cannot endure to have it searched, but light it is, and for light it must go. And what think ye will be the issue of all such pains? Or if he do a little weigh it, it is in a very deceitful scale. He weighs the things of God with his own line, with his own measure, with his own ballance, (and yet alas how can the judgment of man truly scan or determine the things of God!) not considering that that which is very weighty here, is but as the dust of the ballance with God. Yea Christ tells the *Pharisees* (who searched into the Law, and judged things by the light thereof) somewhat harder, *Luk. 16. 15.* *That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.*

VER. 24. *No man can serve two Masters, or Lords.*

A *Lord*, a thorow Lord, a full Lord hath the whole dispose. He is not a perfect Master, between whom and his servant any authority can interpose. There are two great Masters, unto one whereof all appertain; and there is none can please them both. It is not easie to apply ones self to two different things, the one whereof takes up the whole: but altogether impossible, if they be contrary. Can any man serve those two Lords, whose Laws are directly and universally opposite? Man may desire to serve all turns, but Christ tells him it will not be: He may be willing to have the advantage which may come by several Masters, and so may undertake to please them both; but it will prove too hard for him. He cannot perform that service to both, which that condition calls for. He cannot stand equally poised towards both, but his affection and service will encline more to the one then to the other. Man may intend both in his thoughts and designs, and may think the accomplishment thereof easy; but he will suddenly find, that but one of them can draw him. His heart will encline to the one, and not to the other, and his observation will be of the one, and not of the other. *No man*, saith Christ, *can serve two Masters.*

For either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.

The estate of man is such, that as he is but one, so he can entirely serve but one: and if he undertake more, he will fall short in it. If he take upon him to discharge the duty of a servant to two Masters, he will not be able to discharge it. He will not be able to maintain in himself the affection to both, which his due to a Master, but he will be will be hating the one. Or if that were possible, yet

yet necessity would enforce him to cleave to the one, and so to despise the other. For when both command him different (if not quite contrary) things at one and the same time, he cannot possibly obey both: and if either of them be observed, the other must needs be neglected.

Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

God and Mammon are the two great Masters. The nature or Spirit of God, and the nature or Spirit of this World. It is the Spirit of God which ruleth in his people, and him they obey. It is the Spirit of the World which ruleth in the men of the World; and it they obey. The spiritual things of God are conveyed by the Spirit of God to his seed; and the outward things of the world are bestowed by the Spirit of the World, upon the men of this World, according to the Law of that Spirit.

Now both of these, saith Christ, ye cannot serve. If ye will serve Mammon, ye cannot be the Disciples of Christ: If ye will be the Disciples of Christ, and learn of him to serve God, ye cannot serve Mammon. Mammon calls for more of your heart and life, then God will spare. God requires your whole man. If you will be his servant, you must not entangle your self in any relation, or with any affairs of this life, but be perfectly free for him. He that will be Gods, must be wholly his, as Christ was. O how fain would man serve both turns! He would have treasure in Heaven and in earth too; and so he would look after both, and serve both Masters, that he might atchieve it. But this cannot be: For God calls for more then can stand with the service of earth, and earth calls for more then can stand with the service of God. If ye will be Gods servants, ye must not acknowledge, nor have to do with Mammon, further then he gives you liberty, or further then ye serve him therein. If ye be solicitous about this life (about the things of

this World) assure your selves ye cannot be the servants of God. Ye cannot mind Heaven and earth both, ye cannot lay up treasure in the one and in the other. These things have contrary originals, contrary principles, contrary natures, contrary wayes, contrary ends, and they cannot both meet. The life of a Disciple (though it come from Christ, and have the true nature of Christ in it, yet) is not large enough to comprehend both these, but is fitted and appointed to walk in a way of contradiction. The narrow World cannot take in the large nature and life of Christ; and the large and pure nature and life of Christ is not to take in, but to exclude the impure nature and spirit of the World. The darkness cannot know nor love the light, and the light so knoweth the darkness, as to turn from it: It is the property of its nature to do it, and it can do no otherwise. The great wise skilful God hath separated the light from the darkness; hath put another nature and spirit into the things of this earth, then what can agree with that nature and spirit which is from above: so that Heaven and earth at present cannot agree. They are of a different nature, of a different stamp, of different principles, draw different ways, and cannot come under the yoke of one spirit, (as now they are, or in the state that now they are in) Ye cannot therefore mind the things of this life, and the things of another life too, ye must cast off the care of one. If ye will serve God, ye must live upon him, and trust him for your provision in the World: If ye will look after your subsistence in the World, ye cannot be the servants of God. The service of God (especially in this dispensation of the Gospel) takes up the whole man, the whole life with all the motions of it: it leaveth not so much as a word or thought free, but every thing done, spoken, or thought, must be squared with the rule, and filled with the power of this life.

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The World only knows and obeyes the spirit of the World, and will not be had or enjoyed upon any other terms, which they that are Christs (and will serve him) cannot submit to, and therefore must of necessity estrange themselves from the World.

VER. 25. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.*

Hereupon Christ adviseth them that desire to be his Disciples, them that will take upon them to follow him in the service of God, to quit this World wholly, to let go all care and thoughts about it: Not so much as to take care for the most necessary things to this life, *viz.* food and clothing. He that is a Disciple of Christs, lives under the especial protection of God, and he is to live dependently upon God, even for outward things; He is to live by faith upon God, and not upon his own care. He is to be continually hearkning after, and applying himself to the will and pleasure of his Lord, but to leave wholly to his Lord the care of provision for him, even of necessities. He is not so much as to look after either his meat, or drink, or clothes. It were a most vain thing for the spirit of man to think to imitate this strain of life (He that liveth in this World, the life of this World, must take care about the things of this World:) but it is most natural to the Spirit of a Disciple: For hee hath not received the spirit of this World, but another spirit which slayeth him to this World (even to the very natural use of it) and therefore he is naturally taken off from this World.

Yet Christ extendeth a ground common to man. The ground here annexed is sufficient for mans dependance, as well as for the dependance of a Disciple. But man

cannot possibly bring his heart to trust God upon this ground, (Nor indeed is it for poor weak man, to think to live upon God, according to the extent of that foundation of life, which is in God for him) and though he could, yet could he not tel how to bear, or what to make of those disappointments and exercises, which he were like to meet with from God herein. The ground is this which followeth.

Is not the life more then meat? and the body then raiment?

The life is more excellent then the meat, and the body then the raiment. It cost God more, the forming of the body and the inspiring of life into it, then the providing of food and raiment did: And it is more to continue the life, and to continue the body, then to continue the provision of food and raiment for them. The Lord who maintaineth life in you, who preserveth your bodies, will not suffer them to want food and raiment. It being less charge to God to find food and raiment, then to find life and the body, while he doth the one, ye need not fear his failing in the other. There is not a man, no not a creature upon the face of the earth, which hath life and a body, to which God hath not regard, and suffereth them not to want either food or raiment, but upon some considerable account, though they understand it not. Now though they (not knowing God) cannot strengthen themselves upon such a consideration as this (for the trial wherewith God might exercise them in this kind, would be too hard for them) yet ye may. Ye may be sure that ye shall not want what your God and Father judgeth necessary, though ye may often want what ye your selves may be apt to judg necessary. And yet the life in you (if its eyes be open) cannot but see and acknowledg the wisdom, righteousness, and tenderness of the Father, even in his care over the body and the life of it.

VER. 26. *Behold the fowls of the aire: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better then they?*

CHrist prosecuteth this exhortation (of taking his Disciples off from caring for themselves, even about the most necessary things) yet further, both concerning food and raiment particularly. He sheweth them that there is no cause of their fear of want in any kind, which would be very manifest to them, if they could but behold the nature of God, (which is to look after all) or his relation to them, which engageth him in an especial care and watchfulness towards them, for good in every respect. He beginneth first with food in this and the next verse, and afterwards argueth concerning raiment in the three verses following next after them.

Behold the fowls of the aire: for they sow not, &c.

God can provide for you without your care, as well as he doth for other creatures without their care. The fowls of the aire are in as desolate a condition in this respect, as ye can be, in hearkning to the voice of this counsel: for they do not prepare aforehand. They know not how to sow, or reap, or treasure up food; and yet they are provided for, and that by your Heavenly Father. And do ye think that this your Heavenly Father cannot or will not provide for you?

Weigh wel the force of this consideration. It is your Father, your Heavenly Father, which doth thus for creatures at a great distance from him, and can he neglect that which is so nigh unto him? He looketh after the fowls of the aire, he heareth their voice when they cry unto him for food, and is it possible he should either not hear the voice of his own children, or not regard it?

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He who is the Father of your Spirits, taketh notice of the lowest life in the meanest clods of earth, making provision for it, and can he possibly (think ye) suffer your bodies to want food? Hee is your Father, your Heavenly Father, hee is bound to you by a neerer tye, hee is naturally engaged to you in far deeper matters, and do ye think he will see you suffer want in these?

Are ye not of much more value then they?

Ye are not only as neer, nay neerer to God then they, but ye are of much more value with him. There is a great difference between the worth and excellency of your nature, and theirs. As he hath laid up richer treasure in you, so he hath formed you into richer cabinets. There is both reason and justice that hee should look as well after you as them, yea more, for ye are of more worth then they. And he knowing and acknowledging it (for he made you so) ye may be sure his nature and understanding will encline him to take so much the more care of you. So that if he should neglect these, he will be sure to take care of you (*The young Lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing*, Psal. 34. 10) That which a man prizeth and esteemeth most, he hath most care of. Your value and esteem with God will engage him to look after you in every respect.

VER. 27. *Which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature.*

BEsides, it is to no purpose for you to take care concerning your selves: for ye can effect nothing by your care. Ye may much trouble and disquiet your selves, but ye cannot make any considerable change in your selves thereby. As for instance, if ye should take

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never so much care about your growth, what can ye add to your stature? your care and thoughtfulness about your selves is vain, Gods is effectual.

VER. 28, 29. *And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the Lillies of the field, how they grow: they toile not, neither do they spin.*

And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

FOR food then, ye see ye need not look after it, and there is as little reason that yee should trouble your selves about clothing. *And why take ye thoughts for raiment?* To what purpose do ye do it? Why do ye do it? Or what need have ye to do it? *Consider the Lillies of the field, how they grow, &c.* Look upon the Lillies; not the Lillies of the garden, which man takes care of, but the Lillies of the field, which none looks after. Do they take thought? Do they toil? Do they spin? Ye see, ye know they do none of these things; and yet they are clothed, and excellently well clothed too: For Solomon, in all his glorious attire, fell short of the beauty of their clothing. All the art and industry of the creature (improved to the utmost) can in no wise reach the skill of the Creator. God can set off a peece of his workmanship with such beauty, as no art can come near. Solomon was the richest, greatest, and Wisest that ever was: Hee had most accurate Artists, and hee applied himself to State and Magnificence, None like Solomon in his Glory, None like Solomon for the splendor of his attire (*Go forth, O ye Daughters of Sion, and behold King Solomon, &c.*) Solomon in every thing was the mirror of perfection, he set himself to improve and lay out his Wisdom about every thing, so that none was ever clad like Solomon in his
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Glory,

Glory, and yet *Solomon* in all his glorious vesture and ornaments, tel short of the glory of these.

VER. 30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven: shall he not much more clothe you? O ye of little faith!

THese *Lillies* which are so gloriously clothed; consider what they are; compare them with your own state and relation to God; Look into their *Nature*, their *Condition*, their *Use*, their *End*; and then judge whether he which provideth so richly for them, can leave you destitute.

The *Lillies*, they are but *the grass of the field*. They are now, and anon are not. To day they are in the field, and to morrow in the oven: and yet thus doth the Lord clothe this poor fading grass. Though their nature be weak in it self, and their duration but for a moment, yet the Lord doth not neglect taking care of them; or think this cost too much for them. But ye are his own seed, the flowers of his own garden, the receptacle of his own life, his own eternal inheritance, (for in proposing what the *Lillies* are, he doth secretly hint at a different nature, estate, and relation in his own Disciples) and shall he not much more clothe you? Doth he take such care of them, which are so mean in his eyes at present, and do so suddenly pass away; and shall he not much more take care about you, who are so dear to him, and must be so neer to him for ever? If most glorious attire were as fit for you in your present condition, as this is for them in theirs, should ye not have it much sooner then they? but to be sure ye cannot possibly want that attire which is fit for you.

O ye of little faith.

How can ye doubt it? Sure your faith must needs be very small and weak, which can question this Thing. (That Disciple is very weak in faith, who cannot trust God with his body; with the life and liberty of this poor weak fading nature.) Consider but the force of the ground of it; and see if ye can avoid the strength and naturalness thereof. If God provide for creatures at such a distance from him, of so mean value and duration, so carefully, so punctually, both food and raiment: do ye think he will fail you who are so neer to him, and whom he requireth in such an especial manner to depend upon him for these things?

VER. 31. *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

SINCE God hath transposed the care of these things from you upon himself, since your care is to no purpose herein, and his is so effectual; since God doth provide these very things for creatures of a far inferior nature and duration, and of far less esteem with him, and since he cannot but much more take care of you in these respects: Therefore do ye leave of caring. Take no thought at all on this behalf. Leave the whole thoughtfulness thereof to God. Say not within your selves, what shall we eat or drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? The Lord will not, the Lord cannot suffer you to want these things. The Lord in providing these things daily for his whole family, cannot possibly forget you. God cannot put forth his power, his providence, his protection, &c. for adorning and satisfying the common trash of the World (as I may so say) and forget the choice of his soul. As the Lord hath distinguished you from

the World (from the creatures of the World , from the men of the World) separating you for himselfe : so his eyes are towards you , and his heart is upon you , and he cannot suffer you to want what is needful . The Nature of the Lord cannot but behold , consider , and provide for both your spirits , your soules , and your outward nature or bodies , all which are the Lords , and are in this present estate and condition for the Lord .

VER. 32. (*For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :*)
for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things .

HERE is a double ground added to enforce this exhortation .

1. This thoughtfulness after the things of this life , (even that which is necessary) is the work or practise of the Gentiles , *for after all these things do the Gentiles seek .*

It doth not become you who are so neer God , who are separated by God from among the Gentiles , to be taught by him , to know him , and depend upon him , I say , it doth not become you to be like the Gentiles , to mind the things which the Gentiles mind , who are far from God , and have so little hold of him . The Jews , the holy and separated Nation of God , are to live according to the Law of God , and not like the sinful , ignorant , unhewen Gentiles . Indeed it is not for the poor low Gentiles to live at this high rate here mentioned : nor is it for the Disciples of Christ to live after the poor and low rate of the spirit of man , like the Gentiles . How can he live upon God , who doth not know him ? neither doth it become him who doth know him , to live upon himself . It is wel enough in the Gentiles to mind these things , but it is not fit for you , whom God hath called to live upon other terms , namely to live wholly upon him , as well

as for him. Indeed, he must not be a Gentile, but one enlightened by God, quickened by God, taught by God to know and trust him, who liveth at this rate. He who findeth the light and life of God break in upon him with power, he may trust himself with God in every respect; but he who is but a Gentile, cannot but seek after these things. Now yee who are of a different root, of a different principle from the Gentiles, of a different life, &c. it becomes you to live otherwise, to seek after other things, and not to seek after those things which the Gentiles seek after.

2. Ye are to take no thought for these things, because ye have a Father to take care for you, even one who well understandeth your condition and all your wants in these respects: *For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

Though he be your Heavenly Father, and so the chief care lieth upon him in reference to your Heavenly Nature and state, yet he understandeth also your outward condition. Yea as he hath a better ability to answer your needs and desires, so hath he also a fuller sense thereof, by being your Heavenly Father. Earth cannot rightly understand it self, but that Heavenly Nature, which comprehendeth it, can. *Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need, &c.*

Your Heavenly Father, who is to provide all of every kind for you, he *knoweth* what *need* ye have of *these things*. The Lord hath full consideration and comprehension of your wants in these kinds. Perhaps ye may think that your Father is so taken up with his own perfection and fulness, as that he doth not take notice of such inferior matters concerning you. Yes, your Father knoweth and weigheth all your needs in all these respects, and will be as careful and tender in making provision for the supply of them, as ye your selves possibly could

from the sense which ye have of them. Your Father feels your need as much as ye can (for hee that made your sense of feeling, cannot hee himself feel?) and therefore ye need not misdoubt. He knoweth your life, he knoweth the condition of your body, and what a necessity there is of supply both of food and rayment for them.

From hence may two things, of especial use, be observed.

1. *That there is a need in the Disciples of Christ of things for the body.* They have need of food and rayment for the body. That eminent transcendent life wherewith they are endowed by God, doth not deliver them from the wants of the body. That rich Heavenly treasure which dwelleth in them, doth not change the state of their earthly vessels, but they are still subject to the frailties of this nature, both to the affections and passions of the mind, and to the wants, weakneses and casualties of the body. God doth so closely hide the treasure of his own most glorious life and nature in such thick vessels of clay or earth, that none can understandingly espy it there but himself, and such as are in union with himself, and so have the help of his light.

2. *That this need is known to God their Heavenly Father.* God their Father, because of his own height and perfection, doth not forget them in their low and weak estate, but doth know and consider all their wants, all their weakneses, all their afflictions, and all their miseries. God weigheth things out to every thing in this World, not according to himself, but according to its state and condition, which he fully understandeth. This indeed is the great misery of the people of God in their distresses, they are removed so far from the sight and presence of God, that they think God hath forgotten them, and that he doth not sufficiently weigh their present estate,
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weaknesses and wants, *Why saist thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Isa. 40. 27. And again, But Sion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me, Chap. 49. 14. But no nature is so sweet, tender and mindful of its own most genuine off-spring, as God is of his; as the next words following testify. Can a Woman forget her Sucking Child, from having compassion on the son of her womb? Tea they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make hast; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee, ver. 15, 16, 17.*

VER. 33. *But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

GOD hath a Kingdom which he hath promised to his seed, wherein they who are now poor miserable slaves, shall live and reign with him. This their spirits naturally thirst after, and it is their proper employment to seek this Kingdom.

This Kingdom includes in it a new life, a new nature, a new inheritance. It is the very life of God, the very nature of God, the possession of God himself, which is due to his child, unto which all his children are born heirs. Man is born to misery, he is born a slave, and all his motions tend to further slavery: but there is a Kingdom which is set before all sorts to pursue; This, he who undertakes to be a Disciple, is especially to busie himself about: Which that he may prosecute the better, Christ taketh him off from all things else, and bids him apply his whole strength hereunto.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God. Seek ye the King-

Kingdom. Let the World seek the World, the things of the World, the Kingdoms of the World, the possessions and enjoyments of the World: But seek ye the life of God, the Kingdom of God; Seek to reign with God, seek to reign in God, seek ye that Kingdom which God reigns in. A beleever is to mind and seek union with God, and the enjoyment of his Kingdom.

And seek it *first*. Seek this Kingdom principally, seek it chiefly or mainly, seek it in the first place: Let the whole drift and bent of your Spirits go forth towards this: Let it have the beginning and prime strength of your spirits. The World will seek Heaven with you, they will seek God with you, but in the second place. They mind the World chiefly, and God and Heaven only for the worlds sake, or in a creaturely or worldly consideration; so that they seek the World, or the satisfaction of their Worldly spirit, in seeking God. But seek ye God first, let it be the primary, the most natural motion of your spirits: Indeed a true Disciple, whose spirit cometh from God, who truly knoweth God, cannot but seek God first.

And his righteousness.

There is a righteousness of man, and a righteousness of God. A righteousness lovely in mans eye, and suitable to mans nature; and a righteousness lovely in Gods eye, and suitable to Gods nature. The righteousness of man is a poor, weak, low, fading, an already broken righteousness, a righteousness for ever to pass away, further then it is renewed and raised in the righteousness of God. But that righteousness which Christs puts his Disciples upon seeking, is a strong righteousness, a full righteousness, a durable righteousness, a righteousness wherein no flaw ever was or can be found, it is the very righteousness of the nature of God, wherein all the sins, weaknesses, and imperfections of the creature are blotted out and cannot appear. There is an holy righteous
estate

estate in the blood of Christ, and an holy righteous nature in the renewing by the Spirit of Christ. This or these every Disciple is to mind chiefly. And as for other things of an inferior nature, things which concern the life of the body, things which refer unto this present estate; So far as they are needful, they shall flow in upon him, or be thrown in unto him: *and all these things shall be added unto you.*

And all these things shall be added unto you.

A Disciple needeth not to trouble himself about inferior matters, for the supply of these meaner wants belonging to the body, for God will cast them in unto him without his looking after them. If he faithfully busy himself about the Kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, God hath undertaken to supply him with these. He himself is an unfit Judge to determine what is useful for himself; but God who thoroughly understandeth things, will furnish him with what he judgeth requisite for him, and that without his toiling and turmoiling. That which he is to seek, is *the blessing, the inheritance, the life, the Kingdom, the righteousness*: That which he is called to, is *the Kingdom*. That which is promised to him, is *the Kingdom*. It is about this that God striketh up the bargain with him, and he with God: That which he bargains for with God, is *Christ, the life of Christ, the blessedness of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the remission of sins which Christ hath purchased with his blood*; This is the thing hee desireth of God, and this is the thing which God ensureth to him. But as for these outward things, they are of too low a nature to come in consideration here. As they are but things by the by, so they are to come in but by the by. They are not to come in as any part of the portion, but as an overplus: Nor is he to take any care about them; but they are to come in, as ~~it were~~ accidentally, without his care, without his seeking

ing after them. The great love of God which bestoweth the other, doth comprehend, and cannot but provide these also: but they are to issue forth, and be received in a kind of careless way, on each hand, as becometh such kind of things. This great ado which is about the body and the things of this life, discovereth plainly the emptiness of this present estate, the pitiful or lamentable spirit and condition of those which now go for Disciples: For if the Spirit of Christ, if the Nature of Christ, if the Eye of Christ, if the Heart of Christ were sown and sprung up in them, these things could not be of value with them. As the Spirit of Christ saith unto them, *Seek the Kingdom, seek not these things*: so their hearts, their spirits would answer, *These things, O Christ, we cannot seek, but the Kingdom only.*

Yet this prescript to *seek the Kingdom of God in the first place*, doth seem to imply a liberty of seeking the things of this life also in a secondary slight superficial way. As we are to use this World as if we used it not, so we are to seek the things of this life as if we sought them not. Such a kind of seeking is not so as the Gentiles seek, nor doth it hinder the fidelity or ardency of the Spirit toward God, yea it is rather an expectation and dependence upon God for them, then a seeking of them. Every one is to stand in his proper place, unless he be called by God out of it. The call to Religion doth not dis-engage from any relation (although it be a relation of bondage) or take a man off from the exercise of his calling, but endueth him with a more excellent Spirit for the ordering and discharge of it. So that a Disciple, though he is mainly to seek and serve God, yet he is also to *work with his hands* (if his condition require it) for food and clothing, or what ever else is necessary and comfortable for him in this life, as also that he may have to *give to him that is in need.*

VER. 34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self: ſufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

THE Spirit of a Diſciple is to lead a free, a quiet, a ſtill life: To live dependently like a child upon the Father; not carking or forecasting for it ſelf, but every day receiving its proviſion of daily bread from him. It is the ſtrangers that are to look after their own food and raiment, not the children of the family. Your Heavenly Father knoweth not only your wants in general, but all your particular wants; He hath undertaken to provide the ſupply of them for you, to caſt all needful things in upon you without your care. He hath ſet you about another work, and tranſpoſed this burthen upon himſelf. It is not proper for you, it belongs not to your place: but very proper for him. It will be burthenſome and unprofitable to you (*which of you by taking thoughts can add one cubite unto his ſtature?*) it is natural and eaſy to him. And mind but what he hath ſaid unto you and employed you about, and ye ſhall not be to ſeek for any of theſe things: For ſeek but firſt the Kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow.*

For the morrow ſhall take thought for the things of it ſelf.

The morrow's proviſion ſhall come with the morrow. What yee ſhall need to morrow, either for food, or clothes, or any thing elſe, the morrow ſhall bring with it. The child needeth not take care what he ſhall eat or drink, or wear to morrow, but to morrow he ſhall be ſure to find convenient food and raiment, if his Father be able to provide it for him. He that taketh care to bring

about the times and seasons for your sake, will not fail to take care of sending with them what yee shall need therein. The supply of all your wants in every season, lieth upon him who bringeth about the season, and ruleth in the season, and doth all with the eye of his soul upon, and with the strength of his heart toward you. Therefore do not ye trouble your selves about to morrow: The care of, and provision for you, is written in the very nature, course and commission of to morrow; so that if there be a morrow, if the morrow issue forth, it must come with care and provision for you. All the care concerning things of the morrow, belongeth wholly to the morrow, and not to you at all. Ye are no more to take care for the things of the morrow, then ye are for the morrow itself. Indeed the whole creation (if it were in its right state and temper) should live wholly upon God its Creator and Father, without any care at all. But what the World hath lost, the Disciples of Christ (by vertue of the redemption of Christ) have a taste of a new. The distance between God and them is broken: They come neer him, They live to him, They live upon him: and he taketh punctual care concerning them; not only for their spirits or souls, but for their very bodies. So that all the things that appertain to them to morrow, hee hath committed the care and thought of unto the morrow: and the morrow cannot faile of accomplishing it, for it is written in the Law of its nature. The morrow cannot but be it self, because it dependeth only upon God: and if it be it self, it hath in it, and bringeth with it, what is necessary for them. God who bringeth the morrow for their sake, cannot neglect them in it; *The morrow shall take thought for the things of it self.*

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

God who hath cut our times and seasons, and all occurrences therein, hath also proportioned the evil or affliction

affliction which is to come along with every season. Every day hath its evil. God who hath appointed the day, hath also appointed the evil of the day. It seemeth good to the great Father of all, to exercise all his children; to exercise *Adam*, to exercise his people the *Jews*, to exercise the *Disciples* of Christ with evil every day. And this evil they will find enough for them to grapple with. There is no need of adding to it. Nor will it be profitable for them to add to it. Our benefit lieth in the burthens which God provideth for us, and imposeth upon us, not in those which we draw upon our selves. As there is lost labour in every dispensation (a man may easily so run as not to obtain) So there is also lost evil, lost affliction, lost sufferings: Sufferings to no end, to no purpose, to no advantage. To many, if not to most, their whole day, with all the good and evil of it, is lost.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

To forethink, To take thought and care aforehand is an evil, an affliction, a burthen to him who is too weak for it. Every day ye shall find load enough, ye need not add hereby unto your burthen. Your Father who knows your need of affliction, will provide every day a sufficient cross, and therefore ye need not go about to make it weightier, by adding a burthen of care concerning the day ensuing.

Let me close this Chapt. with these three observations upon this verse.

Observ. 1. *Every day hath its evil*, its affliction, its trouble, its burthen: And not only a bare burthen, but a full burthen, a burthen sufficient for every ones back in that day. God who knoweth the strength of every Disciple, hath prepared enough for every Disciple to bear every day. He that will be a Disciple of Christ, and learn of him to seek the Kingdom, must expect his full cross daily in his following of Christ, in his pursuit of

the Kingdom. Now he will find it full enough for him to take up this, to apply himself to the bearing of this, and not to burden himself about crosses to morrow, about what may happen therein, about what he may want then. Let him bear patiently and submissively his present want, and not add to his affliction by considering what crosses may follow after, how his wants may increase to morrow, and what he shall do then if he be thus put to it already. It is enough for a Disciple, if he have strength sufficient to carry him on along with his present burthen, let him trust God for the future, who hath taken the care of the future upon him, and hath promised him therein to stand by him, & not to fail him nor forsake him.

Observ. 2. *It is not the will of Christ, that Disciples should augment their own cross.* He would have them bear patiently what God layeth upon them, but not make it weightier unto their spirits. What God thinks enough for them, he also thinks enough for them; and he would have them also think it, as well enough, as not too much. And indeed, he is most quiet and sweet-spirited in bearing the cross, who is shiest of increasing it. He who maketh rods for himself, is commonly most unquiet, not only with them, but with those also wherewith God chastiseth him.

3. Consider and observe well, *What a sweet life God hath provided for his people here in this World; in the midst of all their troubles, afflictions and miseries.* The great burthen of burthens is care, that he taketh wholly from them. They are only to mind his service, and not what will befall them in the least. They are to take no thought for the morrow in no respect, neither for the life of their souls or spirits, nor for the life of their outward man; They are not so much as to desire the possession of any thing which will encumber them, whether outward or inward. All that they are to desire, either for their spi-
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rits or for their outward man, is *daily bread*. They are not so much as to wish for the fulness of life from Christ in their own possession, or at their own dispose; but only for such a supply as they daily need to be given in just when they need it. They are to forecast nothing aforehand, (they are not to treasure up either wisdom or strength) but assuredly to expect the receipt thereof, when they are to use it. The Lord, who is their portion and inheritance for ever, is their present storehouse; whom they must so far trust, as not to desire a stock from him into themselves, unto which they may have resort; but only so much as their present condition calls for the use of. In extraordinary cases they must not bethink themselves of extraordinary remedies, but trust him as fully and quietly as in the most ordinary case. When they are brought before the great and wise ones of this world, where traps and snares are laid for them; yet they are not so much as to cast a thought aforehand what to say, but to enjoy themselves quietly with what they have at present, and to trust themselves with God for what provision of wisdom, safety, life and spirit he shall think fit for them (who hath promised to give it in to them *in that very hour*) and so to take contentedly and thankfully what comes, and theres an end.

O how sweet, how satisfying, how free from all care, trouble, solicitude and perplexity is the temper, strain, spirit and life of a Christian, when he is himself, and lives like himself! when he lives from God, and to God, and in God, and with God! Alas, for the spirit of man to rack himself up to this, (who hath not the life and power of it in him) is the greatest torment and vanity in the World: but the flowing forth of this from God into the spirit, and the natural springing up of this in the spirit, is the most easy and delightful thing that can be.

A N
E X P O S I T I O N
O N
M A T T H E W
C H A P. VII.

VER. 1. *Judg not, that ye be not judged.*



CH R I S T the L O R D and Master of his Disciples, bindeth them very straitly from judging: *Judg not*, saith he. He doth not say, *Judg not these or these persons*, or *judg not in these or these respects*; but he laieth it down in general, *Judg not*.

Judg not your Fellow-Disciples, judg not the World: Judg not their future estate, judg not their present actions: *Judg not*. It doth not become the broken estate of a Disciple to judg. Though the ground of judgment be just, yet it is not proper for you to do it. Though men sin, and the cause of judgment be cleer, yet it doth not become you to judg them for sin. Christ doth not say, *Judg them not unjustly*, but he saith, *Judg not*. Though ye can do it upon never so good a ground, though ye can do it never so justly, yet *judg not*.

Judging is the deciding of a thing in controversy. There are many things in controversy in the World, or in the Worldly Spirit, There are many things in controversy among Disciples, even among them who do

not

not only pretend to another spirit then the World knoweth. Now do not ye undertake the decision of them, but leave them to that season and that light which is appointed therefore. Make use of your light to walk by, and to help others (both Disciples and the men or the World) but do not bend it to peirce into that, which it is not as yet strong enough to do. What hast thou to do with another mans heart, with another mans conscience, with another mans principles or practises? He is to answer these to him from whom he hath received his being, his nature, and the Law thereof, and not to thee. Indeed if the true light of the Lord do discover any thing to thee concerning another, yea if that in thee judg which can justify it self, so far thou art not to be blamed: but it becometh thee to take very good, lest thy impure flesh prophane the Holy Spirit of the Lord, in venturing upon this under the shelter of his name.

There are two things in judging, both which are very condemnable. First, *there is a judging of evil according to our measure of light.* That which is evil in us, or would be so to us, we judg to be so in and to all. Secondly, *there is a judging of the causes, fruits, effects, desert, and end of that evil.* Neither of these is a Disciple to do: that may not be sin in a Brother, which would be sin in thee: nor may it deserve or produce that, which thou judgest it needs must. The light of the Lord, by which these things are to be measured and judged, is larger, deeper, and perhaps of an intenser nature, then that which springeth up in thee. The light which is in thee (suppose it to be true) must keep within the bounds of its own line, nature, strength and degree, or it cannot but err in its motions. The Lord *Christ* himself, in his fleshly appearance and course was not to judg, but only to speak out the righteous sense and judgment of the Spirit of the Lord, which liberty is also granted to all the seed of Christ in
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 their

their generations; in which limits if they keep, and do not intermingle therewith the sense and judgment of their own flesh, they dash not against this Law of the Nature, Spirit and Life of Christ: for then it is not they who judg; but the Nature, Life and Spirit of Christ, which judgeth in them.

Yet Disciples (especially while they are young and unexperienced in Christ) are very obnoxious to this error. For so soon as ever they are let a little out of the dark state of the World, presently they fall a judging (yea in every thing that is new to them, they become new judgers still.) They fall a judging the World out of which they were transplanted: They fall a judging their fellow servants among whom they are set to walk. They hardly turn from any thing, or move toward any thing, without judging others. (Every one that is not in the same path with them, is a transgressor.) But it is not from the life of Christ that they do thus. It is not his light that thus teacheth them, or his spirit that thus pricketh them forward hereunto: but it is their own flesh its abusing of this light, against the express will and command of Christ, who saith to them, *Judg. not. Judg. nothing before the time.* It is not for you who are the Disciples, Members, or Churches of Christ, to judg any thing before the time. Ye are now to grone with the World, and mourn with your fellow Disciples under that weight of sin and the curse (for though ye are in part redeemed; yet ye are in part slaves) which lyeth both upon you and them, but not to judg them; *Judg. not.*

This dissuasive injunction Christ preffeth upon them from divers considerations. As first from the danger they may incur thereby, of which they are warned in the latter part of this verse, *That ye be not judged:* which danger Christ assureth them to be very certain vers. 2. *For with what judgement ye judg, ye shall be judged, &c.*
There

There is no avoiding of judgment if ye be judges. Secondly from the iniquity and unreasonableness of the thing. ver. 3. 4. 5. *and why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy Brothers eye, &c.* These considerations are not single but contain much united force and variety in them, as the searching into them will make manifest.

That ye be not judged.

It is very dangerous to Disciples to be judging others, either their fellow-servants, or the World, for it may draw down judgment upon themselves before they are aware. It may provoke God to act that toward them, which they themselves thus begin with toward others. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Ye your selves are not yet perfectly justified. (the Lord can find a flaw in that righteousness which man thinks unimpeachable, either under the Law, or under the Gospel) and this may bring you under that condemnation, which by your Disciple ship ye are in a fair way to escape. If your Lord find you judging of others, he may call you to account for that which otherwise he might have let pass. Judging of others is a line that leadeth men to their own judgment. A man that judgeth another, evidenceth thereby that he himself is not yet fit to be justified. If his spirit were broken enough to be bound up, wounded enough to be healed, condemned enough to be justified, undone enough to be saved, he could not then be judging. He that is acquitted by the light of the Lord, is taught by the same light to leave judgment to the Lord. He that is justified himself, dares not, nay cannot fall foully upon another for that, wherein he himself was freely justified.

What canst thou say for thy self, *O thou Judger of thy Brother*, why thou shouldst not be judged? Thou judgest him upon just ground thou wilt say, Is there not also just ground of judgment in thee? And if the Lord, notwithstanding this just ground thereof, hath not judged

ed but freely acquitted thee, oughtest not thou also to forbear judging thy Brother, and desire that he might likewise be freely acquitted by the Lord? If thy heart were right in thee, thou could'st not but breath after every ones pardon and deliverance from sin and misery, as well as thine own.

I cannot let either of these clauses pass without an observation.

1. As touching the former (*Judge not*, saith Christ to his Disciples) This may be taken notice of.

Observ. *A judging temper is not fit for a Disciple, in the eye of Christ.* It is not the right temper of a Disciple. Judging is not an action befitting a Disciple, is not such an action as Christ alloweth in him.

There are two things exceeding lovely in a Disciple, both whereof this is contrary unto. The first is, *A brokenness of Spirit in himself for his own vileness.* Though a man be pardoned for his sin, yet the sight of what he was, the remembrance of what was blotted out in him, nay of what is stil in him and upon him (further then the Lord pleaseth of his own free goodness to blot it out continually) should keep him very low in his own eyes, even as low as if he were stil lying under the guilt and condemnation of it. The second is, *A pity and tenderness of spirit toward sinners.* He who knoweth the bitterness of his own wound, although he be in part healed himself, yet cannot but yearn over those who remain stil exposed to the violence of the same wound. How did Christ pity sinners, even the most stubborn sinners? *O Ierusa'em, Ierusalem, &c.!* The more men lye open to judgment, doth not afford us the more liberty of judging them, but the more should it excite our pity. It no way becomes a condemned person newly pardoned, to judge his fellow-offenders, but to pity them, and to lye abased under the sense of his own desert, which by the mee

meer mercy of the Judg he hath lately escaped the danger of.

From the second clause, *that ye be not judged.*

Obſerv. *Judging of another is a plain evidence that that man himſelf hath not paſſed the judgment.* He that judgeth is yet in danger of being judged himſelf: and in very great danger, in the eye of Chriſt, even ſuch danger as he cannot avoid, as Chriſt tells him in the next verſe. Indeed he that is thoroughly judged, judgeth all things; but not after that manner that the unjudged Diſciple judgeth any thing: Not with a blind eye, nor with a bitter ſpirit. He judgeth another, as the Lord hath judged him. The Lord ſaw all his evil, but overlooked it: ſo he ſeeth clearly the evil in another, but he doth not judg him for it, but in ſtead thereof deſireth that the Lord would not judg him, that the Lord would overlook it alſo, as he hath done his. He who is ſevere toward the ſins of others (or rather toward others be-
cause of their ſins) never had a true ſenſe of the need, nor a true taſte of mercy. O how wretched is the cruel ſpirit of man, to proſecute others ſo violently for that, which it looketh upon it ſelf as having eſcaped only by favour! To bring in indiſtments, and proſecute them ſo ſharply againſt ſinners, as if it ſelf had never been one! Is it not fit that this ſpirit ſhould be judged? Surely this ſpirit deſerveth ſeverity more juſtly then the vileſt ſort of ſinners: And ſurely it muſt needs go worſe with ſuch a Diſciple, then with the worſt of the World: which thing Chriſt intimateth ver. 5. in that he calls him *Hypocrite*. An *Hypocrite* is the worſt of ſinners: Others are threatned to be puniſhed with them (*The Lord of that ſervant, &c. ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the Hypocrites*) as if Hel were moſt proper and purpoſely provided for them. Now the hypocriſy of a Diſciple is the worſt kind of hypocriſy. And

mark with what indignation Chriſt ſpeaketh to him in that 5. verſ. *Thou Hypocrite, firſt caſt out, &c.* He giveth him counſel angrily; He ſpeaketh ſeverely to him, even now ſhewing him a forehand what he muſt look for in judgment; how ſeverely he will deal with him, if he do not follow this his advice, but come under his fingers.

VER. 2. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged: and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again.*

Chriſt enforceth the conſideration of the danger from the certainty of it. Diſciples may hope to eſcape notwithstanding their judging of others. They are pardoned, and God doth not uſe to recal his pardons. Whom he juſtifieth in Chriſt, and for his ſake, how can he afterward be condemned? O do not deceive your ſelves with your own vain reasonings, Chriſt who underſtood both himſelf and the truth, hath ſaid it, and that to his Diſciples, *with what judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged: and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again.*

There are two things in judging or in paſſing judgment. Firſt there is *the judgment which one paſſeth*; and ſecondly there is *the meaſure whereby he paſſeth the judgment*. Every man that judgeth doth it by a meaſure. Any man that pretendeth to juſtice, doth not judge at rovers, but by his light, either of natural reaſon, or of ſpiritual illumination or revelation. Yet this is the fault of moſt men, They have too ſtrait a meaſure to meaſure others by, and ſo commonly paſs too ſevere a judgment upon others. Mans ſelf-love perverts all his light, perverts every meaſure of his, ſo that he meaſureth himſelf ſtill too favourably, and his neighbour too ſtrictly.

A man ſeldome ſeeth any evil in or from himſelfe which he cannot extenuate, nor any evil in or from his neighbour which he is not apt to aggravate. Now a Diſciple having a greater light then ordinary, is more ſkilful in judgment, more ready to judge, and more confident in his meſure. Hath it not been an uſual brand upon profeſſors (and not altogether unjuſt neither) their cenſoriousneſs? Any man that hath any peculiar light (as he accounteth it) which way doth he make uſe of it almoſt, but in judging? It is not without cauſe, that Chriſt taketh ſo much pains here, to debar his Diſciples from the exerciſe of that, unto which they are ſo propenſe, and which is neither profitable to others, nor commendable in them.

For with what judgement ye judge, ye ſhall be judged: and with what meſure ye mete, it ſhall be meſured to you again.

Here is a ſharp two-edged ſword, a deep conſideration doubly weighty. Diſciples had need look to the judgment they paſſ, for they ſhall meet with the ſame again: and they had beſt look to their meſure, for their judgment ſhall be meſured to them by the ſame meſure. There is matter enough of judgment in all, and the Lord will rip up that matter of judgment in him that judgeth another. It is moſt righteous, that he which judgeth another, having the ſame thing in himſelf, ſhould have it alſo judged in him; and that it ſhould be judged by that very meſure, wherewith he himſelf judged the other. Although the meſure may be unjuſt in it ſelf, (may be too ſevere, too ſharp) yet it is moſt juſt that it ſhould be made uſe of toward him, who hath already made uſe of it toward another. For ſuppoſe ſuch a meſure (as men or Diſciples commonly meſure with) might be made uſe of; yet he hath nothing to do to make uſe of it, to whom it belongs not to judge: but he may
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most juſtly make uſe of it, to whom it belongs to judge, (and who can bring forth in righteouſneſs and manage righteouſly every meaſure) eſpecially toward him, who hath unjuſtly made uſe of it toward another. Chriſt who is the Maſter of his Diſciples, who knoweth the Law of Diſciples, he ſharly and plainly tells them, that this they muſt expect, if they will be judging. If they will be judging others, God will judge them; and that with the very ſame judgment, meted by the very ſame meaſure. This hath paſſed the lips of Chriſt concerning his Diſciples, who ſtandeth bound by the truth of his Nature to make it good. O tremble ye Chriſtians, tremble ye judging Diſciples of Chriſt, who expect nothing leſs from him then this! Ye expect that he ſhould judge you pardoned, juſtified, ſanctified by his blood and ſpirit. No, it is not he who hath judged, or who hath continued judging, but he who hath paſſed on in the brokenneſs of his Spirit, whom Chriſt will acquit.

The three next verſes diſcover the iniquity and unreaſonableneſs of this temper, poſture, and manner of motion together with the proper remedy for the cure of it. *And why beholdeſt thou the mote that is in thy Brothers eye, but conſidereſt not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou ſay to thy Brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou Hypocrite, firſt caſt out the beam out of thine own eye, and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to caſt out the mote out of thy Brothers eye.*

The iniquity and unreaſonableneſs of this thing appears chiefly in this, in that he that judgeth, is ſtill worſe then he that is judged by him. He that judgeth is alwaies worſe, even in that very reſpect wherein he judgeth, then he whom he judgeth. We are all bad enough, but he that judgeth another for evil, is ſtill the worſe. For firſt he hath more of the ſame evil in him, ver. 3. He hath

hath a *beam* in his eye, whereas in the others there is but a mote. Secondly, Notwithstanding his evil is the greater, yet he takes upon him to be the fault finder and rectifier of his Brother, he observes his brothers *mote*, and offers to help to pul it out for him. Now it is very unreasonable and evil for the greater sinner to undertake to be a *Saviour* to the lesser. Thirdly his evil is deep, close, covered, the others is open and manifest. *Thou Hypocrite*, He is an Hypocrite, he seems to have a cleer eye, his brothers mote is visible. It is the hidden nature and course of sin (though it be lest observed) wherein the depth and danger of sin lieth. It is the veiled sinner (whose iniquity is hid from his own eye) which the Spirit of Christ delighteth to search, and make manifest upon the stage. The Hypocrite, his zeal is kindled against smaller evils in the lives of the Saints: but the zeal of the Spirit of Christ is kindled against that great inward evil, which lieth hidden in his heart and spirit, who is in his outward appearance (in his *duties*, in his *graces*, in his *principles*, in his *practises*) very pure and holy.

VER. 3. *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy Brothers eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye.*

Christ here taketh it for graunted that he that judgeth, hath more of the nature of that evil in him which he judgeth, then he whom he judgeth. This may seem very strange to him who judgeth, but Christ doth not so much as reason it with him, but layeth it down as positive, founding his further argumentation upon this supposition. He doth not say what if thou shouldst have a *beam* in thine own eye, whereas that which thou espieest in thy Brothers is but a mote? But he saith, *why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy Brothers eye, but considerest not*

the beam that is in thine own eye? Thereby directly concluding it to be so. Sin is exceeding strong where its nature and course is hidden. There is no such sinner as the Hypocrite, whose beam in his eye be it never so big, yet is still concealed from his eye.

And why beholdest thou ye mote that is in thy Brothers eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

This is a sharp correction or reproof of the Judger, by the Spirit of Christ, for his beholding of the lesser evil in his Brother, and his overlooking the greater evil in himself.

There is evil in himself as well as in his Brother, the very same evil, in the same part of himself; yea more evil there than in his Brother: And yet he overlooks that, he takes no notice of that, but his eye is altogether poring upon the evil in his Brother. But why dost thou thus saith Christ? Why dost thou behold his *mote*, and not consider thine own *beam*?

This is such a question, as the Judger will in no wise be able to answer, when his eye is opened to see himself. Now he will not believe that he doth so, but when it is made manifest to him (which that Spirit, which hath spoken it can do) he will then be as much ashamed, as he is now self-conceited and confident. He will then be as speechless, and as unable to render a reason, as he is now full of grounds of self-justification on this behalf. And indeed put the case thus (as Christ hath put it and knoweth it to be, though the Judger will by no means believe it to be so) there is no man can answer it at present: but while the vail of Hypocrisy is over his heart, and he seeth not the beam in his own eye, it is easy for him to justify himself.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy Br others eye, &c.

For a man to be fixing his eye on his Brothers mote, wondering

wondering at that, weighing the evil and danger of that, and in the mean time take no notice of, spend no thoughts upon, but wholly overlook the beam that is in his own eye, every man will condemn the injustice and unreasonableness of this. A man ought to eye himself more then another, to observe the evil of his own heart and waies more severely then of anothers: Though his own evil were less, yet he ought to look more on it. But his Brothers being so little in compare with it, and his beholding his Brothers so much and not considering his own at all, argues great partiality and injustice, even such as there can be no fair plea or Apology for.

VER. 4. *Or how wilt thou say to thy Brother; Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye.*

CHRIST prosecuteth the discovery of the unreasonableness of this thing, by removing the best plea which man can alledge for himself for his so doing. There is an unreasonableness in it, notwithstanding the best end for which thou canst do it. If thou saist that thou dost it with an upright mind, with a good intent, with a friendly desire to help and deliver thy Brother from the evil which thou observest in him, yet that doth not take away the unreasonable or unrighteousness of it: For although that be a good work, yet it is altogether improper for thee. It is a work which thou art not fit for, a work which thou canst not go through with.

Or how wilt thou say to thy Brother; let me pull out the mote, &c.

It is a work which thou canst not with modesty set about. If thou didst but understand and consider thy self, thou wouldst bee ashamed to undertake such a thing as this. What thou, who hast a beam in thine own eye, to of-

fer to pul out thy brothers mote? Thou who hast so many corrupt principles in thy judgment, to teach thy Brother how he may be freed from his! To offer to purge from thy brother the scum of that, the dregs whereof are in thy self? To be striking at the remainders of that in him, which reigns in thee? How canst thou for shame offer this service?

And yet if thou wouldst offer it, how couldst thou possibly effect it? He had need have a cleer eye himself, who maketh anothers eye cleer. Hee must have right principles, who sets strait the principles of others. A man cannot rescue another from that, wherein he himself is entangled. He must be without a mote in his own eye, who cleerly sees to pul out the mote from the eye of another. Alas then, how canst thou possibly do it, who hast a beam in thine own eye! How wilt thou go about the work to any purpose, when as behold a beam is in thine own eye!

And behold, a beam is in thine own eye.

Thy *beam* is very visible to them who are in the light. Stand where I do, look with my eye, thou wilt presently stand amazed at thine own beam. *Behold*, Look upon thy self, look into thy self, look but rightly upon thy eye, and thou canst not but see the beam there. It is as manifest, nay maketh a greater appearance in the light of God, then thy Brothers mote. Indeed in thy fleshly judgment, according to thy fleshly sight of things, thy brother is the sinner, and thou cleer: but it is not so with God. The light of God searcheth out the secret sins and sinners: it openeth the heart, and the iniquities thereof.

Behold, a beam is in thine own eye.

Had the Hypocrite but a true eye opened, but a true light shining about him, he could not be observing so much the outward motions of evil in others, as the
strong

strong inward nature of the same evil in himself, which brings forth the very same fruit (*for thou that judgest, dost the same things. Rev. 2. 1.* and thou dost them according to the nature and strength of the root in thee:) but because he wanteth an eye to see this in himself, therefore is the other (which he observeth in his Brother) so great in his eye.

VER. 5. *Thou Hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy Brothers eye.*

THE evil of this temper of judging, yet further appears both in its root and fruit, which is Hypocrisy, *Thou Hypocrite.* If a man were not an Hypocrite, he could not be a Judger. It is from a root of hypocrisy that a man is inclined to judge, and it is from the spreading of this hypocrisy over him that he doth it. If the evil of a mans own heart, waies and principles were not hid from him, he could not be so forward to condemn and rectify the hearts, waies and principles of others, which are not so much amiss as his own. There is a vail of hypocrisy over his eye, over his conscience; and from that springs up this fruit of hypocrisy in his motions. And yet alas, how many are there very zealous in reforming of others now, whom Christ will one day thus take up and condemn, *Thou Hypocrite*, what didst thou mean to busy thy self so much about smaller evils in others, and let alone that in thy self which now must prove thy ruine.

First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, &c.

This is the proper way of curing this dittemper; This is the remedy, which Christ hath appointed his Disciples to apply in time to this evil in themselves, whereby they might attain that good end which they unduly aim at,

and improperly apply themselves unto. First look to thy self, first look to thine own heart, to thine own waies, to thine own principles, Be sure the beam be removed thence. Indeed let a man search into and judge himself, and he will find little time or propensity to judge another: and yet then might he be able to do more righteously in reference to his own spirit, and with more advantage in relation to others. He alone can forbear judging, who only is fit to judge but the sinner, who is full of wrong principles, he cannot for his heart but be judging others, and be offering to rectify them. We are all blind, wanting a guide; but the most blind are most forward to be leading others, and them also are the blind most apt to follow: in so much as this is the common estate of the World, **THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND, AND THE BLIND OBSERVE AND FOLLOW THE BLIND; BUT THE VOICE OF TRUE WISDOM WILL NOT BE HEARD HERE.**

And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy Brothers eye.

So much sense and observation of the evil of another as may tend to their good, is very commendable. He that hath true senses and meeteth with a proper object, cannot but exercise those senses about them. It is natural to every ear to hear, and to every eye to see the things of its own kind: yea there is a care and watchfulness upon every one who is brought forth in the same line of life, toward his Brother in that line. But these are to spring from a right root, and should be so managed as that they may come forth righteously from us, and profitably toward our brother. We must not look upon our Brothers evil with an evil eye of our own. We must not feed or give way to our own flesh in finding fault with his.

his. We must not blame that in another, which though it may lye more hid, yet is more strong in our own spirits. We must first be truly saved, before we can help truly to save. We must first be truly purged and enlightened, before we can help truly to enlighten and purge. Thou must not *hate thy Brother in thy heart and suffer sin upon him*: but thou must first be true in love to thy self, and not suffer sin upon thy self. Thou must not, in the abundant corruption of thine own light and principles, think to purify the light and principles of another: but first purge out the filth of thine own heart, *first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see cleerly to cast the mote out of thy brothers eye.*

Q. But here perhaps some might thirstingly enquire, *How should a man cast the beam out of his own eye?*

Ans. Indeed it is not in man to do any thing of this nature, but it is only the enterance of the light and truth of God which expels a mans darkness and corruption. Yet there are alio motions of the creature against his corruption, as well as there are of giving way to it. And though man cannot, yet the spirit of a Disciple, let into the light and power of the Gospel, may need his pardon. But which way this may be done, I shall not take upon me to direct, only this much I have to say to thee who enquirest. Observe but the same course thou wouldst prescribe to thy Brother. Try thy principles as fairly as thou wouldst have thy Brother try his. Be but as just, as impartiall thy self in the matter, as thou wouldst have thy brother, and perhaps they may quickly fall. O Lord God. what would stand, if it were not lugged and maintained by corruption, by vanity! And alas hereby it standeth but after a poor manner, and for a poor season! Some few very considerable things may be observed from the three foregoing verses.

Observa.

Observ. 1. That which men chiefly judg in one another is somewhat in the light, somewhat in the eye, somewhat in the principles, somewhat in that whereby men see and direct their motions in spiritual things. Indeed the fountain of all evil is the eye. Most men that are any thing serious, would walk more exactly (without so many wanderings, or at least without so much confidence in their wanderings), were it not for something in their eye. It is their *wisdom* and their *knowledge* (their wise and understanding apprehensions concerning God and Religion) which *perverteth them*. The different course and judgment of parties, ariseth from the difference in judgment and principles. This men very well know, and therefore this it is that they chiefly apply themselves to judg in one another. That which they look upon as the common cause of evil in, and of danger to their brother, is somewhat in his light whereby he walks, somewhat in his eye wherewith he sees, somewhat in his principles whereby he directs and orders his course and conversation. Thus the *Papist*, *Prelatist*, *Presbyterian*, *Independent*, *Anabaptist*, *Seeker*, *Familist*, &c. they all judg one anothers principles, they behold motes in one anothers eyes.

Observ. 2. That men are very prone to justify their own principles, though never so bad, and to condemn the principles of others, though far less evil or dangerous. The Disciple that hath a beam in his own eye can espy a mote in anothers, and overlook the beam in his own. The beam in his own eye doth not seem to be any such thing; the evil, the corruption, the danger of that is not manifest, doth not appear to him; so that it passeth for light, for the right substance and colour of a pure eye: but the mote that is in his brothers eye, the evil of that is very visible and demonstrative to him.

Observ. 3. The readines of men to offer help, to deliver

liver others from their false principles. Every one would be pulling the mote out of his brothers eye. The Papist would be healing the Protestant, and the Protestant the Papist; The Presbyterian would be healing the Independent, and the Independent the Presbyterian, &c. but who looks to himself: who busieth himself about the beam in his own eye?

Observ. 4. The hypocrisy of men in these their desires and endeavours: for they do not this by a clear light in themselves, and with an honest heart, but from mis-biassed principles, and with a corrupt heart. *Thou Hypocrite* saith Christ, who knoweth the heart. He telleth them that they are Hypocrites in this thing, and act Hypocritically in the doing of it. They paint, they hide, they dissemble, they miscolour their own principles and their own practises, so that they see not the evil in themselves; inasmuch as they judge not that in themselves, which is worse, to be evil at all, but let that remain there and cherish it, and in the mean time fall foul upon that which they think they can manifest to be evil in their brother.

Observ. 5. and lastly. The true way to heal another, the way for a Disciple to cure his disordered brother, is first to be sure of soundness in himself. *First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brothers eye.* He whose eye and heart is indeed clear and pure, is now in a condition to help to cleanse and purify the heart of another. *Physician, heal thy self.* How shall a Physician be able to cure another of that, whereof he himself is sick? but let him first cure himself, and then he giveth a good evidence of his skill and ability to cure another. A man whose own principles are grievously false, how can he set anothers straight? but let him first set up a true light in his own understanding (let him first correct his own errors, mistakes

stakes and wanderings from the nature and spirit of truth) and then he may be able truly to enlighten another.

VER. 6. Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.

THE Lord, who hath formed and knoweth the nature of things, hath also suited a course and provision in nature for things; which it is natural and sweet to observe, and inconvenient and dangerous to transgress. There may be *Dogs and Swine*, as well as *Children and Servants*, about the house: and they are to have their proper provisions and accommodations: but as they are neither children nor servants, so they are not to have that which is proper and peculiar to the children and servants; *Dogs and Swine*, as they are common and unclean in their nature; so hath God appointed for them that which is common and unclean, and not the holy and precious things of his spirit.

Dogs are such as are unholy, such as are not purified by the life of Christ, and by the renewing of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Under the Law the *Jews* were the *Holy People*, the *Circumcised People*, the People purged from sin and purified by God. The rest of the World were *uncircumcised and unclean*, and commonly by the *Jews* called *Dogs*, whereunto Christ might allude in his answer to the Samaritan woman, *It is not fit to take the childrens bread and give it unto Dogs*: But under the Gospel the *Jews* also are *Dogs*. All that are not sanctified by the Holy Spirit of Christ, are of the unclean spirit of this World. They that have not in them the spirit of a Son, or at least the spirit of a servant, by a new birth from

from the Spirit of the Lord, must needs be of the old unholly, unclean, common nature.

Swine are more unclean then Dogs. They have a farther degree of impurity then Dogs, in the same common unclean filthy nature. They are of a more brutish, of a more beastly, of a more impure nature, then Dogs: more greedy, more ravenous, more outrageous, more noisome, more wallowing in the mire of this World then Dogs. Some sinners, in their courses, keep far more within the line of reason, humanity, and natural devotion then others do. Some are only unclean to the eye of Religion, but others are so unclean, that the very common eye of most ordinary nature can take notice of the filth of their spirits and courses.

Holy things are such things as are set apart and sanctified by God for the use of his people. Either, such things as are let down from Heaven, or such as are taken and separated out of the common mass of the earth: as the *truths*, the *ordinances*, the *motions*, *breathings* and *operations* of his life and spirit, &c. As God hath set apart for himself an holy people: so he hath set apart many things for them. And all these things, which he hath so set apart, are holy; the which he hath given them, and appointed them to enjoy within a pale, as it were, from the reach, view, and knowledg of the World. God who bringeth forth his people out of himself; out of his own womb, out of his own life, out of his own light, out of his own nature, out of his own bowels, bringeth forth things together with them out of the same light, out of the same nature, out of the same spirit; and these things which God so bringeth forth, the very nature and shape of them speaketh that they are only for this people, who alone are of the same nature with them. Thus in the day of the *Jews*, under the time of the Law, the *holy anointings*, *instructions*, *priviledges*, and *ordinances*.

of the Law were for them, and not for the World: And in and since the times of the Gospel, the things which God dispensed therein by his Spirit, were for that people whom God quickened by the same Spirit, whom he also called out of the World, and fitted by their new nature to know, make use of, and sanctifie God in those things. Those who have *received not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God*, are to receive from the same Spirit the things of God, and to enjoy them in the same Spirit; not with the World, but among themselves. Men do but harp at a separation (and foolishly manage it, separating from those things and persons which they are the same with:) but when God, who knoweth the nature of things, discovereth that nature; he will then lay the foundation of, and bring forth a real and solid separation. He will then jumble together on an heap of confusion those things, which are now separated; and he will separate those things which are different in their nature, though now confuted together.

Pearls. Pearls are known to be precious rarities in nature, of great use, of great worth, of great excellency. All things that are holy and spiritual, are of an excellent kind, and so in a sense may be called *Pearls*: But yet, besides that common excellency of nature which is in them all, there is a peculiarity of excellency in some of them (as there are degrees of excellency in things of every kind) so that they are more especially *Pearls*. All spiritual things are *Pearls* in compare with earthly things, but some spiritual things are Pearls in compare with other spiritual things. They are not called *Pearls* meerly for their spirituall excellency of nature (wherein all spirituall things do mightily transcend the things of this World:) but for their eminency in that nature. Thus there are some beams of light, some sparks of life,

life, some rayes of a more wonderfully-divine rarity, which carry great verue, and have specially-vigorous influences on those upon whom they are darted, drawing as it were the perfect lineaments of God in those where they enter. There is a common knowledg of God, arising from the common nature of truth; and there is a common spiritual life issuing thence: but there is a peculiarity of knowledg, and a peculiar strain of life and communion with God, from the peculiar nature of some truths.

Your Pearls. The *holy* things are theirs, peculiar for them: but the *Pearls* are much more theirs, much more peculiarized. There is none (among the creatures) can understand or make use of a Pearl, but man: Much less can any understand or make use of these *Pearls*, but the new man.

Give not that which is holy to the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine.

In these *holy* things, in these *Pearls*, there is the choice will of God, the choice nature of God, the choice wisdom, excellency, life and power of God; and they that understand them, will esteem them wonderfully: but *Dogs* and *Swine* have no sense of their nature and worth. Therefore Christ (who knoweth the true nature and use of spiritual things; who first dispensed them himself, and understandeth how it is fit for the dispensation of them to proceed) hath taught his children to enjoy them among themselves, and not to prostitute them to the common or unclean nature of man.

Give not, &c. neither cast ye, &c.

Christ alludeth to the usual way of imparting things to *Dogs* and *Swine*, which is by giving and casting. To *Dogs*, which are instructed how to receive from us, we give, To *Swine*, we cast. But Christ will permit neither of these to be done, in this case here mentioned.

He never intended the *holy* things and *Pearls* of God, either for the naturally unclean, or for the more perversely corrupted spirit of man, and therefore forbiddeth his Disciples either to *give* them to the one, or to *cast* them to the other. *Give not that which is holy to the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine*: which prohibition denoteth these two things.

First the propensity that is in Disciples to be thus doing. They love to be dispersing their spiritual things, They love to be spreading abroad their treasure: *Stewards* are generally either unjust hoarders up, or prodigal scatterers. They are very few, who have the skill, or will take the pains wisely to dispense. There is an itching humor in the spirits of Disciples, to be opening their wares and presenting them to view.

Secondly, the impropriety of this. This is in no wise fit to be done. These *holy* things are not to be given to *Dogs*, These *Pearls* are not to be cast to *Swine*. If Disciples did understand the mind of Christ, If they were led by the Spirit of Christ in this particular, they could not thus act. He who hath not a principle of purity in him, knoweth not the excellency of things that are *holy*. He who hath not an eye of a spiritual understanding, cannot see into the worth of, or prize the *Pearls* of the spirit. The holy and spiritual truths of God, are not fit for the carnal spirit of man: and therefore ye do not wel (not properly, not wisely) to give them or cast them to him. If ye will give or cast to the spirit of man, give him what he can feed on, cast to him what hee can understand: but prostitute not these things unto him, which his nature and state is not capable of.

Now to enforce this the better, there is a consideration of the danger proposed in the next ensuing words.

Lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.

There is a double danger of this improper indiscreet action, which Christ maketh use of, to dissuade his Disciples from it thereby. There is a danger to the *holy* things of God which are thus dispensed, and there is likewise a danger to them who propose or dispense them. The *truths* of God, the *ordinances* of God, the *Pearls* of God will suffer hereby; and ye your selves will be in hazard of suffering hereby too. They will be trampled upon, and ye will be rent. That is it which ye are to expect from *Dogs* and *Swine* for your miscarriage herein.

If ye give *Dogs* or *Swine* that which they can eat, they may take it quietly at least, if not in some degree thankfully. But give them that which is of never so excellent a nature, and of never so great value, if they find it not within the line of their sense for their present use, they will not at all regard it, but trample upon it, and perhaps flye upon you for this your abusing of them. Thus it is in this case here. There is nothing more irritates a carnal spirit then a Pearl, then a truth which he understands not: presently he swels against it. The great quarrel between the World and the people of God, is still about truths which excel the worlds understanding. The people of God will still be holding out to the world these things, and would have the world receive and acknowledge them according to their nature and worth, which is both against the mind of Christ, and contrary to the nature of the things themselves, and against the nature of man. And thus both the things themselves come to suffer, and the people of God come to suffer with them: Now saith the spirit of Christ, to the Disciples of Christ, Weigh these dangers well: would ye not have the *holy* things and *Pearls* of God trampled upon by the *Dogs* and *Swine* of this World? would yee
your

your selves not be rent by them? Why then beware of this, *Do not give that which is holy to them, Do not cast your pearls before them.*

VER. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

THe souls pursuit after what it wants, after what it misleth, after enterance into and communion with its life, is shadowed here under these resemblances of *asking, seeking, knocking.*

There is not any motion in this outward nature, but it representeth somewhat more inward in the new nature of the new-born child. Doth our nature ask? Doth it seek? Doth it knock? So doth the new nature also. And as there is somewhat to hear, receive and answer all the desires of this outward nature in a way proportionable to its present state: so is there somewhat also to answer the other. There is that which heareth its requests, that which knoweth and prepareth for it what it seeks, that which openeth to its knockings. Thus it is in the nature of things, how far soever, in the sensible course of things, the appearances of both these may fail. There may appear no considerer of the outward nature, no nor yet any considerer of the inward.

Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find &c.

There is no greater or stronger desire any where to be found (or so much as to be imagined) then is in the disciple or child after its Lord and Father, after the nature and spring of its life. O how strong is the inward inflammation and pursuit of the spirit here! what kindling within, or what goings forth without doth not this nature fall into of it self? It *asks*, it *seeks*, it *knocks*, it is very industrious and vehement after things that properly appertain unto it at the present, and that it

might

might at length arrive at and sit down in its own root.

Yet nothing seems to miss more of what it desires, and pursues. Nothing hath more real and effectual answers, yet nothing hath more appearing discouragements. God, who hideth himself from every thing, hideth himself from nothing more then he doth *from the house of Jacob*; so that though they never do, yet they almost alwaies seem to seek his face in vain. Are there vain askings, ineffectual seekings knockings in the outward nature to its fence? they are much more so in this nature, even to its most quick tender and piercing fence.

Now Christ encourageth their fainting spirits to that, which though their own nature putteth on toward, yet there are so many waves and floods to damp and drown. He bids them *ask, seek, knock*: *Ask* for the life of their spirits, *seek* after it, *knock* for entrance into it; assuring them that it shall not be in vain, but what they ask in this kind shall be given, what they seek in this kind they shall find, what they knock at for entrance into shall be opened to them. He who knoweth the nature and course of this life in all the spiritual motions occurrences and effects thereof, bids them pluck up their hearts and go on courageously, for it shall certainly be effectual to that end for which the life in the fountain hath appointed it, and toward which the life in them stirreth up and guderth it.

VER. 8. *For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

Thus it is in the kingdom, thus it is among the disciples, thus it is in the life of Christ when the nature of it is opened. Every motion of the Spirit of the child, is answered and satisfied by the Spirit of the father. Every

thing that the child asks, is given him: every thing that the child seeks he finds: every door that the child knocks at, is opened. The Apostles and disciples of Christ had an abundant testimony of this (immediately after the death resurrection and ascension of Christ) upon the descent of the spirit of Christ on them and their letting into the kingdom. They had free access to the throne, full audience of every request, what they asked, they received; what things of the kingdom they sought, they found; yea they had a door opened, an entrance given them into all the mysteries of God and godliness. The great Apostle who knew this very well speaks to the Church of the Philippians after this rate, *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God,* Philip. 4. 6. This made that such a time of melody praise and rejoycing, because of the free intercourse between the nature and spirit of the father and the nature and spirit of the child, for want whereof both do now mourn.

There is nothing in God (no desire, no delight) but there is somewhat in the child to answer: and there is nothing in the child, but there is somewhat in God to answer. There is not, there cannot be any motion of this nature or of this life, in vain or ineffectual on either hand. While God is himself, he cannot but have an heart and motions answering the whole heart and all the motions of the nature of his child punctually. That which was formed by God, that which was formed of God, that which was formed for God, that which was formed according to God, must needs (in its nature, in its composition, and in all its motions according thereto) both answer God, and be answered by him. So that here in this kingdom, in this state, in this life it is most certain, *He that asketh, receiveth: he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it must needs be opened.*

Thus

Thus it is, even sensibly in the time of life, but it is not sensibly so in the time of the death and captivity of the child. *Christ* in the time of his life said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me alwaies* : but in the time of his death and captivity he complaineth, *O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent &c.* He was not then at all sensible of being heard or regarded, nay, his senses told him the contrary: yet for all that the true natural desire and language of his spirit was as truly heard and answered as ever, as himself confesseth (from his after experience) in that 24 verse of the same Psalm viz. Ps. 22. He maketh lamentable complaints, all along that Psalm; *They pierced my hands and my feet*, saith he, vers. 16. *I may tell all my bones* ver. 17. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture* ver. 18. all this while he continues praying ver. 19. 20. 21. Well what was the issue? There was no notice to be taken then by his sight, but he cries out as one left destitute by his God, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why so far from helping me, from the words of my roaring?* But after his eyes come to be opened to see the true nature and course of things in the light and spirit of the Lord, what saith he then? Why then he confesseth and acknowledgeth his wisdom goodness and sweetness in all these hidden passages, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee* v. 22. yea he exhorteth the whole congregation to praise God with him; *Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel*, v. 23. *For he hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard.* Though he seemeth to have despised, yea to have abhorred the afflicted estate of his

Christ and of his seed; to hide his face from the sight of their miserable lost condition, and to stop his ears from all their cries; yet it hath not been so, but he hath seen, and he hath heard. He hath entered with them into all their miseries; and hath still become their saviour out of them. So that though this be true in the lowest captivity, and greatest extremity of the child: yet it is only experimented by him in the time of his life, in the time of the powerfull breaking forth and duration of the kingdom upon him.

Now the spirit of man which readeth this scripture thinking to lay hold of it, and to ask of God with full assurance to receive, (though they be heavenly things which he asketh) will be wonderfully befooled. The nature of the father knoweth how to satisfie the nature of the child, and the will of the father knoweth how to fulfil the will of the child: but he knoweth not the desire of a stranger. In his bounty he can answer all desires which arise from any true spring unto him: but the spirit of man cannot truly ask these things, or in this kind; and therefore the spirit of the Lord cannot truly answer it; though indeed man may do that which he may call asking, and may receive and enjoy that which he may account an answer.

VER. 9. 10. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?
Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*

CHrist confirmeth the truth of this thing, which he hath so confidently asserted, by an experiment drawn from the nature and course of man: which though it be very low and dark, yet (so far as it is strait and just) is a true image of God.

Man, who is engaged by natural love to his off-spring, will not give that which is contrary to that which is asked by

by the nature or need of his own son. If a mans child ask a good and necessary thing for himself, he will not give him an hurtful thing. If he ask *bread*, he will not give him a *stone* to break his teeth : If he ask *fish*, he will not offer him a *serpent* to sting or bite him. He will not give him that which may prejudice and destroy his nature, when he desires of him somewhat to nourish it.

What man of you? &c.

There is no man among you which will do this. This is contrary to the very present nature of man. Man may be found many wayes unnatural, brutish and cruel: but what man is there that can be found thus brutish, thus cruel, thus unnatural, as to ruin or harm the fruit of his own loins, seeking releif and sustentation from him?

Or what man is there of you, who if his son ask bread &c.

This manner of Christs expression, implieth a seeming contradiction in the course of God; to the desires of his people. Indeed, to appearance, when they ask *bread*, he giveth them *stones*: when they ask *fishes*, he giveth them *serpents*. They seek for that from him which may uphold and maintain the life of their spirits, they receive nothing but that which tends to devour and destroy it. But saith Christ though it appear thus, do not conclude it to be so, nay, know it cannot be so. So much hardness is not found in the common nature of earthly parents, and therefore cannot be in the original fountain of true fatherhood. There is a greater naturalness and sweetness among you parents here on earth, then to suffer you to do thus, and therefore there must needs be much more in the great Father of Spirits in heaven.

VER. 11. *If ye then being evil, know to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

T Here is a wonderful readiness in God to hear and satisfy the voice of his children, which ye may easily conceive and necessarily conclude, from that which ye find in the shadow of that relation, sown here below in your selves. He that made the tongue to speak, cannot but form his own ear to hear; nay the tongue is so naturally suited to his ear, that he cannot but delight to hear it. The tongue of God is suited to the ear of the child, and the tongue of the child is suited to the ear of God, insomuch as they both call out one to another, *Let me hear thy voice, for it is pleasant*. Indeed neither desire to hear any thing else, and both have a very strong desire to hear all that the tongue of either can speak. All the desires of God are toward his son, and all the promises of God are to his son, and so far forth only to man (or the creatures) as he is comprehended and brought forth in his son.

Now how can it be otherwise, but that there must needs be such a readiness in God? He who gave this nature to parents, to hearken to the voice of their children, when they desire that which is good and proper for them (as ye know, a Father cannot but give his child what he knowes to be good and necessary for him, especially when the child begs it of him) he hath it much more in himself, even so strong as that he cannot withstand the impulse of it. He cannot but give whatsoever is good for his children, to his children that ask him.

If ye then being evil &c.

If this good thing be in your evil nature (namely to answer the natural and just desires of your children) how can it chuse but be much more in Gods good nature?

ture? Perhaps ye do not give them all that they ask but ye know how to give them that which is good, ye know how to distinguish between their wantonness and their need. If ye deny them in any thing, it is in that which ye judg improper and inconvenient for them, but ye deny them no good thing: How then think ye can God deny his children any good thing, any thing which their nature needs and desires ^{his} of nature? The children of God are so taught by the Spirit of the Lord, and by their own nature which they have from the Lord, to touch the heart and soul of the Lord; that he doth not know how to deny them any thing that they thus know how to ask. He is so engaged to them by his natural goodness, that it is impossible for his nature to start back from them in this respect. This lesson is so written in the evil nature of man, that he cannot forget it: but it is much more evidently and firmly written in the good nature of God. *If ye then being evil, know how &c.*

There are two very important considerations held out in these words.

1. A necessity of an absolute propensity in God to hear the voice of his children, to answer all the desires of their souls, to supply them with every good thing that they can ask of him: for that which is thus in a nature which only flowed from his (and which is very much corrupted) must needs be much more in his own, which is the fountain of the other, and which still remaineth pure. We can find no good, no justice, no mercy, no kind of sweetness here below, but we may assure our selves it is much more in God.

2. The unreasonableness of thinking otherwise, Christ argueth it so cleerly, so strongly, as may make the very reason in the spirit of his people ashamed not to acknowledge it. *If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your*

your children, how much more ſhall your Father which is in Heaven, &c. Surely if ye fairly weigh the ſtate of the caſe, if ye truly conſider the nature of God, ye will find and conclude it to be ſo, notwithstanding all the contrary appearances and experiences of ſenſe.

If any will extend it yet further either to the nature of the creatures or of man, even in this his preſent ſtate, I will not oppoſe him therein. For though man doth very vainly ſeek to lay hold on God, and ſo miſſeth in all his motions toward him: yet there is footing even for the very nature of man to faſten upon in the nature of God, were but mans nature opened and taught the right way to it. Yet this I muſt ſay withal, that the nature of man hath not, nor cannot have this in way of diſtinction by it ſelf, but as it is reduced into and brought forth in the nature of the ſon, which is its proper ſource and principle. So that though this be true that God knoweth every thing, God heareth every tongue, every language, every voice: yet this is alſo true, God knoweth nothing but his Son, heareth no tongue, no language, no voice but his Sons, and the Son alſo knoweth and heareth nothing but his Father. In al the multitudes of the tongues, languages, and voices of the creature, this is the only ſound which he regards, *God in them*, the ſpeech, the ſound the eccho of God in them.

VER. 12. *Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

T *Herefore.* Becauſe ye have ſuch a way open to the ear and heart of God: Becauſe God is advancing you unto ſuch a diſpenſation, wherein he will appear nigh unto you in all that ye call upon him for; Therefore do not interrupt your own happineſs, but walk

walk worthy of this calling whereunto ye are called, that ye may taste, reap, and enjoy the sweetness of it. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

If ye would have your prayer speed; If ye would not shut up that dore against your selves, which the nature and spirit of God hath opened to your nature and spirit in this its present estate, then beware of injustice, be sure to be righteous toward one another, and toward man. Do nothing toward any, which ye would not have them do toward you: neither neglect the doing of any thing to any, which ye would expect from them in the like case. Express the same justice, the same mercy, the same bounty, the same sweetness, the same meekness of spirit, &c. to every one, as ye would desire from them toward you. Indeed the righteous Law can never take place in this wicked world, there is no room for it in the unrighteous spirit of man. What man is there, in what relation or condition soever, that so acts toward another as he would desire from another? I know the self-honouring spirit of man will justify it self in this point, as well as in others: but when the Lord cometh to try us, who shall be able to stand?

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, the same do ye to them.

The rule of righteousness is very large and strait, it permits not one act of unrighteousness, in any one thing, to any one man, upon any one occasion, at any one time; no nor yet the neglect of any one act of righteousness. Indeed if mans spirit were right (I mean answerable to the Law of his own nature) he could not but be universally good and just: but as it is, he cannot be at all good or just, no not in any thing. The *Father*, the *Child*, the *Husband*, the *Wife*, the *Master*, the *Servant*, the *Governor*, the *People*, the *Rich*, the *Poor*, &c. they

are all unrighteous, they all complain one of another, but none of them do (nor can do) as they would be done to. But though man cannot be righteous, though man cannot hearken to the voice of God in the Law and the Prophets, yet surely the Disciples of Christ should: yea a Disciple (who hath the true and pure principle of life in him) cannot but do this in truth, at least in some degree. The truth of his new nature will be acting thus, however the covering of his old nature may interrupt him. Man hath lost his life, and can never bring forth the true substance of it, but a life of a deeper nature and principle may. That life which is more perfect, comprehending the other, may also bring forth the other.

This, Disciples should aim at. Christ taketh Disciples to make them his scholars, to teach them most excellent lessons, even such as no eye can see, no ear hear, nor no heart retain, but theirs. He teacheth them to read, understand, conceive and bring forth all that is in the Law, if not much more also. It is true, he findeth cause of continual pardoning them in their weak and frail estate, but with all he soweth a life in them of a most perfect kind, which daily groweth up more and more toward perfection of degree, both in its nature and in its fruit.

And this is the way for Disciples to have their prayers effectual. The observation of this rule, is that which will keep the spirit of a Disciple in fit temper to have his prayers answered. A Disciple in name, or form, the Lord regardeth not; but him in whom he findeth the substance, the nature, the life, the spirit of a Disciple, him he owns, him he knows, him he hears. The Lord will not endure, that prayer or any service to him should be a bawd to unrighteousness. Prayer is to draw strength from God toward righteousness, not to give scope to unrighteousness. If ye *devour Widows houses*, and think

to make it up by *long prayers*, those prayers will but deceive you, they will not at all stand you in stead: *If I regard iniquity in my heart (saith David) the Lord will not hear my prayers.* The prayers of *Disciples* in this case, will be as abominable now, as the services and sacrifices of the *Jews* were of old; the best whereof (even their *Sabbaths*, *new Moons*, and *solemn Feasts*) the Lord did protest himself weary of, yea his very soul did loath them, *Isa. 1.* in stead of smelling a savor of rest and delight in them (which they alwaies yeild, when they flow from his own nature and spirit) his very stomach did rise against them. That man that will be accepted of the Lord, must have a true principle of righteousness in him, truly sown, truly springing up, and bringing forth true fruit. The want of this undid the *Jews* of old, yea and it also undid the *Disciples* from among the *Gentiles*, so that not only some particular persons, but the whole state of Discipleship (with all the rights, priviledges, and benefits thereof) is fallen, lost, and gone into its captivity.

For this is the Law and the Prophets.

This is added as a reason to inforce the thing. Do to others as ye would have them do to you, Why? *For this is the Law.* The Law (whose righteousness must not be lost) prescribeth this. *And the Prophets*, who testify of the path wherein the Lord will lead his, they speak the same thing, in this respect, with the Law.

That which the eye of the *Jews* was upon for light, was *the Law and the Prophets.* To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them. That light which was let out by the Spirit of the Lord into the Law and into the Prophets, was true light, and cannot but be owned by its own Father, I mean the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord will not come forth to condemn either the Law or

the Prophets, but to justify them and make them honorable. And he that can bring forth any righteousness, answerable either to the Law or to the Prophets, shall also receive honour from the Spirit of Christ. It is the vain spirit of man, puffed up with fleshly notions, which vilifieth either the Law or the Prophets; but the Spirit of the Lord doth not so, but testifieth that they were the true teachings of God, and rejoyceth to see any one either aim at, or conformed to the righteousness contained in them.

This is the Law and the Prophets. This is the truth which both teach, this is the substance at which both aim. That which they call for from man, that which they tend to wind man up unto, is this peece of righteousness here mentioned; namely, *To do as he would be done to. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*, saith the Law. The same love, of the same nature and kind, of the same extent and degree, with the same fruits and concomitants as thou wouldst have from thy neighbour, thou shalt bear to thy neighbour. This is the righteousness of the Law, and this is that the Prophets likewise bear witness to, and also call for from that people to whom the Law was promulged. And is it not a most righteous thing (Doth not the very eye of man see and acknowledg it to?) that what a man expects from another, what he would have another be to him, that that he should do and be to another? This is the imposition of the Law, This is the imposition of the Prophets, yea and this also is the imposition of Christ here upon his Disciples.

Observe hence these two weighty ensuing particulars.

1. *That which the Law and the Prophets did drive at, was to reduce man to the equity of his own nature.* They bid him be himself, They instruct and command him how to be and act like himself. That which both the Law and

Prophets

Prophets aimed at (or if ye will, that which the Light of God in both aimed at) was to point out to man, yea and to drive him to that life, righteousness, and excellency, which comprehends in it all the natural righteousness and excellency of man, and is the only true way to it. Thus *the Law and the Prophets* are continually calling to the *Jews* in that dispensation for righteousness, (indeed for far more then was to be found in them) but yet secretly therewithall pointing to that under the vail, wherein the virtue, strength, nature, and power of this righteousness lies. Every thing that they call for (being faithfully pursued) discovereth that the root of it is not in man, and that this fruit cannot spring from him: yea and also they secretly hint, point at, and testify which is the root which can bear this fruit, and into which the spirit of man being ingrafted and planted may also bear it:

2. *The righteousness of the Law, or any righteousness that is held forth in the Prophets, is not lost in the righteousness of Christ.* All truth, all substance (in every kind) is not drowned, but compleated in Christ. The excellent life and righteousness of Christ, though it is not bounded within, yet it doth comprize and comprehend all other righteousness. Any righteousness that can be found any where else (either in the nature of man, or in the written Law, or in the Prophets) is to be found more abundantly, more fully in the life and righteousness of Christ. So that if ye come to a Disciple, and miss there of any righteousness, of any excellency that is any where else to be found, Surely this Disciple is not what he should be, He is a dishonour to his Master, a reproach to the life, righteousness and excellency of his Master.

VER. 13. 14. *Enter ye in at the strait Gate; for wide is the Gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.*

Because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

THat which the Disciples of Christ seek, is *life* or *salvation*: To avoid that destruction which will overtake the spirit of man, and to enter into that life and salvation which is promised unto the seed.

Now that the Disciples of Christ might not miscarry and miss in this great design, he giveth them this advice to *enter in at the strait Gate*. Not to walk on in the plain path or common roade of the spirit of man, Not to walk on in the reason, wisdom and light of man, But to enter in at that Gate at which it is impossible for the spirit of man to pass.

There is but one Gate which leads into the passage to life, but one Gate into truth; and that Gate is very strait, insomuch as nothing but that which is living, that which is true, can enter in at it. Nothing of man, nothing of flesh, nothing of corruption can get in at this Gate. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, then for a man that is not truly broken and brought to nothing, to enter in at this narrow passage. The life of God is only for the seed of God, and the Gate is only for the seed also. Nothing else can enter, nay they themselves cannot scrue in any thing else, but their own pure spirit. They may come to the Gate and assay again and again, but they cannot draw any flew through it: Their flesh and their blood through it shall enter, yet it may not, it cannot, till it be turned into spirit.

There is a double Gate: A gate that leads into the beginning of the way, and a Gate at the end of the way.

By

through

By the one the seed enters into the feveral paths of life, all which are in the way : by the other, into the Kingdom. But neither of these can the spirit of man reach. The spirit of man can find out and fall into any visible, any formal way of Religion or worship that is found in the world; but having not the spirit of truth, he cannot find the clue of truth in any of them. He not having the life in him, in all his spiritual motions (*his praying, believing, rejoicing, hoping, waiting, watching, &c.*) he cannot possibly reach the truth.

Strive to enter in; saith the Evangelist Luke.

Though the breath of life be free, and is not attained by any motion of the creatures; yet where it is breathed, it becometh very active. All the motions of man, all the desires of man, all the strivings of man must dye and perish: and yet the same things (but of another nature and kind) are found in the new life, yea and there also the very old are quickened. There is all kind of life and excellency of motion in the new leaven, and that leaven also leaveneth the lump. There is not only a new life in the new man, but the old life also is brought forth a new. The Spirit of man, after it is slain by the cross of Christ, shall live again in the newness of the Spirit and life of Christ.

So that both these sayings are true; There is nothing gained by striving, nothing obtained by desiring or seeking, but *I was found of them which sought me not*: and yet there is nothing gained without striving, nothing obtained without desiring and seeking, *The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* There are none enter in at the strait gate, but such as strive. God freely toucheth the Spirits of all his by the Spirit of his life, and they naturally answer that touch by desiring, moving and striving after that life. So soon as ever life is breathed into any Spirit, it immediately han-
kers

kers after its own native country, and bends all its strength and desires to seek out the way and passage to it.

There is a desire and striving of the nature of man, and there is also a desire and striving of the new nature, which floweth from it self (from its own nature, state and condition) and not from the nature of man. This striving puts forth it self in every Spiritual motion and action (as in prayer, in faith, in love, in hope, &c.) Spiritual motions are very quick and numerous, and there is much life and strength in every one of them. There is desire and delight, faith and love, hope and enjoyment, seeking, striving &c. and all in one and the same motion. He that saw but any one Spiritual motion truly and fully opened, would see all these things and much more in it: but as we are, we cannot discern what variety, fulness, and excellency of life there is in every strain and touch thereof. The natural man knoweth not how much, or what variety of life issueth forth in every natural motion: nor doth the Spiritual man (or rather the babe or child) know how much Spiritual life goeth into every Spiritual motion. Neither is there only the striving of the new seed; but the Spirit of man also (which was knocked down and slain in all its own motions) is admitted into and seasoned with this life, inasmuch as both the seed strives in it, and it strives with the seed after the passage to, and possession of the same life.

Strive to enter. That which man naturally and strongly desires, it is natural to him to strive after; He will strive for the end, and strive for the means which conduce there to. And it is as natural to the Disciple, whose desires are far more strong after the life and blessedness of Christ, than mans can be after any thing, to strive more abundantly after it, and after the true passage to it. *Enter ye in at the strait Gate.*

The

The reason Christ giveth to his Disciples, why he would have them enter in at the strait gate is double; The one is laid down in this verse, the other in the verse ensuing.

For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.

The passage to destruction is *wide*, and the way to destruction is *broad*. It is easily found, and found by many. It is the common roade of the Spirit of man, that into which he most naturally falls of himself. And so look every where wherever you find man, you shall find him there (his corruption, or he according to his corruption, walking in one path of it; his excellency his wisdom, his reason, his morality, his religion, walking in another or in some other parts of it.) *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at.*

For wide is the gate.

A man need not trouble himself to enter into the common roade of misery; the gate is so wide he may slip into it, and never so much as take notice thereof. Let his Spirit move which way it will, it may enter in at this gate. Let him bring along as much as he will with him, this gate will receive him. No man need strain to get in here. A man may bring in all his corruption, all his vanity into that passage which lieth in any form of Religion. Forms of Religion may perhaps strike a little at some out-side busineses, but they will suffer the life of all manner of vanity and corruption to remain still in the Spirit, nay they will help to make the soul subtle in covering and enjoying its iniquitie. *Wide is the gate*, The enterance into the way of death is very large, it lets in the whole nature, the whole Spirit, the whole courie of the whole man, in any kind or degree either of profaness and wickedness, or of its devotion and Religion.

gion. At this gate all *Heathen*, all *Jewes*, all *Christians* (except such only as are of the true nature and Spirit of Christ) may enter in altogether and at once (with all their impieties and purities) without crouding.

And broad is the way.

The way to death is as broad, as the gate is wide. There is room full enough for the Spirit of man to walk in its utmost latitude. Man hath scope here either in profaneness and wickedness, or in Religion and devotion to the utmost. How wicked were the *Heathen*, how wicked were the *Jewes*; how devout were the *Heathen*, how devout were the *Jewes* in this path! *Paul* that strict and zealous *Pharisee* (and so all other *Pharisees*, *Sadduces*, and other sects whatsoever) with all his knowledg in the law, with all his righteousness according to the law with all his zeal &c. Had scope enough here, there is no desire, no endeavour, no motion of man, nothing in man whatsoever, but as it may enter in at large at this gate, so it may walk at large in this way. Indeed the Religions of man make a bussle, as if they were somewhat more them they are: They make a bussle about *life* and *death*, about *mortification* and *vivification*, but there is no true death, nor true life in them. There is indeed a kind of quickening in every Religion, but it is but death; and there is a kind of killing, but it is not in truth. There is at best but the slaying in form or in this or that appearance, but the same substance presently sprouteth up elsewhere; which plainly sheweth that it was not slain in its nature, but only in its form. And this is the great mystery of iniquity, which reigns in the Spirit of man, namely, in that he saves the nature vertue and power of his corruption, by prosecuting and seemingly sacrificing the outward visible form of it.

And many there be which go in there at.

The whole race of mankind naturally enters in at
this

this gate, and falls into this way. Look upon the Spirit of man in any form of *Atheism*, *Heathenism* or *Devotion*, and here you shall be sure to find him. O how vastly different do the Spirits of men seem one to another, and yet how perfectly do they meet in one and the same principle root and practise of iniquity! They are altogether become filthy by the same pollution, and wallow in the same mire of corruption. The *Indian*, the *Turk*, the *Jew*, the *Papist*, the *Protestant*, the *Prelatist*, the *Presbyterian*, the *Independent*, the *Anabaptist*, the *Seeker*, the *Familist*, &c. differ vastly in their several appearances, but enter in at one and the same gate, and meet in their Spirits in one and the same way. This may seem now very strange to them all, but will one day be acknowledged by them all, when they shall come truly to see into the nature estate and course of things, and of their own spirits.

VER. 14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

THIS is the other reason or second branch of the same reason. *Disciples* had need look well to their entrance in at the gate, and that the way wherein they walk be right, because the gate is strait, and the way that leads to life is narrow. It is hard getting in, hard keeping in: but easy slipping aside, easy stepping out. The entrance into the state of life is a very strait entrance. The spirit of man must be truly changed, truly slain, truly quickened that enters there. It is so strait, that nothing but thin, pure, unmixed life can get in there. Well may no corruption get into the Kingdom, for none can get in at the gate, that gives entrance to the way that leads to the Kingdom. And yet if

corrupt man could get in at the gate, he could not walk in the way: It is too narrow for him. There is not ſcope enough in the way of life for the ſpirit of man to fetch ſo much as one ſtep. The feet of man are too broad for this way. God hath of a truth excluded man from life, from the inheritance, from the Kingdom; his very conſtitution, his nature, his make doth neither ſuit with it, nor with the way to it. There is nothing but the ſeed that is in any capacity of approaching toward it, and the Lord hath no ſmall ado to bring them thither. It requir-eth no ſmall pains or coſt to bring them in at the gate, and to keep them in the way. God is ſain continually to be pruning of them to make them leſs and leſs, and to be ſtill ever and anon caſting them into the fire to make them thinner and thinner. *If the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved*; God hath much ado with the righteous to ſave them. *Israel*, the righteous nation typically, what ado was there to redeem them from *Egypt* and bring them to *Canaan*. The whole courſe of life runs along in a narrow untrodden path, where the uneven ſpirit of man never trod ſtep, but *the redeemed of the Lord* (who have been ſlain quickened and guided by the ſpirit of the Lord) have only walked therein.

And few there be that find it.

Many ſeek, but few find. There is none that ſeeketh from and in the truth, but findeth: but they are very few. The common root of man, with all the fruits thereof, falls to the ground. None of the ſeekers in the World can poſſibly find, yea and of Diſciples there are but few, among many, that find. The common multitude of them fall into the broad way unawares, and only ſome few that are rightly pointed, carefully guided, and continually exerciſed by the Spirit of the Lord, theſe only find what they are taught by the Lord and by their own nature (which is alſo from the Lord) to ſeek.

Theſe

These only find the gate and the way now, and these alone shall find life in the end: But the multitudes of all sorts (even of Disciples) shall vanish and come to nothing, but be turned into Hell with the World: They shall come to the end of that broad way wherein they now walk, though they see not the one for the present (they see not now that they walk in the broad way) nor expect not the other for the future. But he that hath a new light, a new life, a new spirit, a new principle, a new nature, a new guid and leader, He shall find and not miss the true passage and way here, and the true end hereafter. Though there be but a few, yet there are a few that find. *And few there be that find it.*

Observe here, what it is that every Disciple aims at and seeks after. He seeks for life, and the gate and way to it: for the one, *viz.* the gate and way now, and for the other, *viz.* the full enjoyment of life, in the end. He seeks not for an immediate possession of life at present (If such a desire be found in him, it is imposed upon him, it is not natural) but for the gate and for the way that lead to it. If he were but satisfied concerning his light, concerning his leading, concerning his steps in the way, it would be enough to him now. The spirit of man cannot endure, either to enter in at the gate or to be in the way (He cannot abide such a strait passage, or such a strait path:) but the spirit of the child cannot endure to be out of it. He cannot walk in any of the paths of the broad way of the spirit of man, be they never so seemingly glorious: and when he cannot find his own path in his own way neither, he must needs be much afflicted.

VER. 15. *Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves.*

OF all things a man should look to his light, and to his guide in the way of life. The Lord hath to ordered things in all his dispensations, that they are some to teach, some to be taught: Some candles he lights and sets up, at which others are to be lighted. When the day of the Lord cometh, he will be quite out of the way, who looks for any thing from man: but in the day of dispensations he may be as much out, who expects any thing but through man. While the Lord pleaseth to teach his people by *Prophets*, the people of God (who will know the Lord) must learn of them.

Now, there are *false Prophets*, such as have not the true light of God, such as do not teach the true way of Christ, but lead aside unto vanity and a lye. As there is error as well as truth, darknes as well as light: so there are the Prophets of darknes (who are inspired by the spirit and principle of darknes) as well as the true.

And these *Prophets*, they come to you. The merchants of Hell and of death, bring forth their wares among the children of light, with great desire to impose upon them. *Darknes* doth not care so much for carrying darknes along with it, as for seducing the *light*. Darknes and light are enemies, and they do not assault their own parties, but one another.

Nor are they easy to be discerned, for they come in *Sheeps clothing*. Darknes when it comes among the children of light, it comes with a covering of light about it: even as light, when it comes among the children of darknes, comes with a vail of darknes over it. God hath alwaies veiled his pure light (in the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*

Prophets of old, and in his *Son* and *Apostles* in the later times) with a vail of darkness: He hath drawn a covering of earth over the Heavenly treasure. The pure life of God lieth hid many times under the reason, nay under the very weakness of his people; and from thence it breaketh forth (even after a poor weak manner) to assault the strong holds of the spirit of man: And of a truth, for all its weakness, such is the vertue of this light, such is the power of this life, that it troubles and startles man in the midst of all his strength. The same courtes take the children of darkness, the *false Prophets*, they cover themselves with the garments of Sheep, they come and appear in the habit of Sheep, (they look just like Sheep) they come as it were with much innocency, with much plainness, with the very nakedness of truth. They seem to have the intirest honestest spirits, both toward God and toward you, that can be imagined. They are in their representation (in the garments they have put on) just like the Saints of God, like the Prophets of God. Nay *the Prophets of God* appear far more unlovely, far more unlike his Prophets then these: For they appear openly what they are; Their *corruption*, their *weakness* is commonly manifest: The Lord doth usually order it to be so, and they themselves take no care to hide it. They know they are but poor weak earth, and desire to appear no other, *that all the excellency of the glory* (of that true light and life that shines through them) *might be of God and not of them*. But it is otherwise with the *false Prophets*: what-ever is unlovely in them, is deeply hid within, and there is nothing to be seen but *sweetness*, *uprightness*, *purity of light and love*, both toward God and man.

Now of these saith Christ (who knoweth their nature, and the estate and danger of his Disciples) *Beware*. O whom will not these deceive, if there be not very great wariness!

evident!

wariness! An honest heart, where he hath such an evident demonstration (as it were) of purity and integrity, knoweth not how to be unworthily jealous, nor hardly how to be wisely considerate. Indeed *the innocency of the Dove* doth (in this case especially) very much need *the wisdom of the Serpent*. How to behave ones self worthily toward these, and yet safely toward ones own spirit also, requires a mighty strength of wisdom. Groundless, jealousy is base, and unworthy of a man, much more a Christian; and over-hasty belief is both foolish and dangerous.

This then is the right path in this case, to *beware*, to *walk wisely*. To improve the eye God hath given his Disciples to see with, and the heart to consider. There is a spiritual wisdom, in the nature of that spiritual life which Christ hath bestowed upon his Disciples, make use of it. Do not receive either things or persons, further then indeed ye know them. *Try the Spirits*, try the nature of truth, before ye own it: Try the life, and understand it to be such, before ye acknowledg it. Make use of your wisdom, and then ye may distinguish those *which say they are Jews, and are not, but do ye*; though it is unworthy to judg so, till ye evidently find it. This course agrees with the golden rule of *Doing as ye would be done by*. I would have another secure himself from me, till he knoweth me. This Law, this desire is written in my heart, in my very nature. Indeed I could not desire that another should unjustly suspect me; but yet let him not trust me, until he findeth in me a bottom for his confidence. I would not receive any truth of Christs, no not Christ himself, until my soul knew it to be him, or that truth to be his: Nor can I deal otherwise with any that pretend to come from him. Innocency without wisdom though it be a very harmless folly to others, yet it is very harmful to ones self.

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Christ annexeth every strong reason to enforce this counsel of his about warineſs, even concerning ſuch as appear ſo gloriously : *For inwardly they are ravening Wolves.*

The danger is very great which the poor Sheep are liable to by reaſon of them: for they are *Wolves*, they lye in wait for your life, they come with this mask purpoſely to make a prey on the life of your ſpirits. Alas ye are much miſtaken, they are not what they ſeem to be, they are not *Prophets*, they come not to feed your ſouls with ſuch precious light as they ſeem to hold forth, but *Wolves* that come to deſtroy that life, which they ſeem ſo able and induſtrious to build up. They are *Wolves*, their very nature engageth them to ſeek your lives, to feed their own with. Wonder not that perſons ſhould be ſo wicked to ſeek to deſtroy poor harmleſs ſouls, it is their nature, the nature of their life requires ſuch food. They muſt eat the fleſh and drink the blood of innocent ſouls, or they cannot live. Yea they are *ravening wolves*, Wolves that have a ravening deſire in them, Wolves that are even hunger-ſtarved, exceeding greedy after their prey. They have not only a deſire of nature, but that deſire is very vehement. There is a ſtrong appetite, an exceeding great hunger and thirſt in them to prey, feed upon, and devour the life of your ſpirits. There is no truſting of their ingenuity, for they are no more able to ſpare the life of your ſouls, when they ſpy their advantage, then the ravenous hungry Wolf is to ſpare the poor Sheep. Yea they are this inwardly, *inwardly they are ravening Wolves*. This is their inward nature, how far ſoever they ſeem otherwiſe in their outward appearance. Yea herein lieth the great ſnare, in that their inwards and outwards do ſo differ. Their outwards are the moſt ſweet, pleaſing and taking, that can be; none is better clad, none is more clad like a Sheep,

(indeed he is very artificial in his appearance, who lieth in wait to deceive) but within there is the most desperate wolvish nature that can be, the very ravenousness of the nature of a Wolf, *inwardly they are ravening Wolves.*

Observe. *There may deadly poison be hid under the most precious appearances of life, the danger whereof cannot be escaped without great wisdom and wariness.* Christians (with the life of Christ in them) are like sheep, who have not strength in themselves against the wolf, and may easily be surpris'd by him (in the habit of a sheep) if they be not very wary. Christians are not to take such liberty, as to hearken to any person, or to any thing (as it is now very usual in this loose confused state;) but to be wary that that which they hear be the voice of Christ; to hearken to none but where they taste the favor of Christ, which they must not determine neither from the outward appearance; but from the knowledge of the truth. The work of edification is an hard work; One Sermon, one notion may destroy more then twenty can build up. It is here as in other cases; There must be a concurrence of proper causes, or the effects will not be produced. The want of any one cause may hinder all the effects, but it requires all the causes to bring forth one full effect. And when a thing is brought forth, it may easily be quashed; but it is difficult cherishing, preserving and causing of a thing to grow to perfection. We are not easily built up by the very *Prophets of that Lord;* but we are easily destroyed by *false Prophets.* Beware therefore of *false Prophets.*

VER. 16. *Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

THe way to search into, discern, and know things, is by their fruits. The natures and causes of things are

are hid, and are no further seen by us then they discover themselves in their effects. Seeing we cannot peirce immediately into the nature and causality of life and death, we must be content to take the sight thereof reflectively, at the rebound. The fruit maketh manifest the nature and vertue of the root.

Ye shall know them by their fruits.

Every cause hath its own effect, every tree hath its proper fruit; by the coming forth and appearance whereof, it is known to be what it is. There is a proper fruit of the life of Christ. There is a peculiarity in all the fruit that floweth from that nature. All the fruit of the Spirit of Christ (all of him that springs up in his seed) favors of his death and his life, which they that have Spiritual palats can taste and distinguish. Represent thousands of Spiritual deaths and thousands of Spiritual lifes, a savory palate wil discern and distinguish the death and life of Christ from them all. It will be sensible of the meanest touch of that, and be able to distinguish it from the highest strains of the other. God hath not given his people Spiritual senses for nothing, but to make use of them: The *eye*, the *ear*, the *taste*, the *touch*, the *smell* is to distinguish and put a difference between things. And he who is skilful in the use of these, cannot be cozened by the very choicest contrary-resemblances. Bring a sweet, meek, tender, harmless, upright Spirit into view; He that hath a true Spiritual nature, frame and largeness, will tell you presently whether these things in it be artificial or natural; whether they flow from the seed of man, though outward operations, or whether they issue from the seed of life in the Spirit. Yea he can discern the favor of life under its earth, under its corruption; and he can discern the favor of death under the highest heavenly or Angelical appearances. He that hath a right Spirit, sticks not at all at the shape, but

through

peireth presently into the thing, he is not taken with the shew of fruit, but searcheth into the nature of it.

This kind of searching and judging is proper and necessary for a Disciple (being a fruit of his own nature, and such a fruit as the need of his present condition requireth) and hath no co-partnership with that judging which floweth from the corruption of the Spirit, and is forbidden in the beginning of this chapter.

Among other grapes of thorn, or figs of thistles?

not
thistles

Thorns do no bear grapes, nor thistles figs. Men do not go to thorns to gather grapes there, or to thistles to gather figs there. And altogether as unseemly is it for a Disciple of Christ to run to false Prophets for the light and discoveries of Christ. There is an especial fruit which the life of Christ beareth, and which nothing else can bear. They which are Disciples know this fruit, and where this fruit is not, they know there is not the life of Christ. If the *sweetness*, the *meekness*, the *faith*, the *love*, the *humility* or any other fruit of any, have not the savor of the Spirit of Christ in it (which their Spirits know) they naturally turn from such persons. Man with all his sweetness and inimitable and living excellencies, which he can possibly cause to spring forth from himself, or gather from abroad, is still but a thorn or thistle, and cannot bear or bring forth the grapes and figs of the Spirit. In all his light, life, and glory he is but a stranger to the nature and truth of Christ, and is dis-relished and avoided by that which is Spirit in the true seed of Christ. *My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger they will not hear.* They run to the true vine for the grape, and they know the true vine by the grape: but as for thorns and thistles (which are quickly distinguished from vines and figtrees) they have no recourse to them.

Observe. It is the intent and appointment of Christ for his Disciples to have recourse only to them for instruction,

struction, who have the true life and light of Christ in them. It is unnatural for a Disciple to address himself to any for instruction, in whom is not the truth of life, in whose heart and Spirit the true light is not set up. Instruction is a *leaven*, and it cannot easily convey the right savor (the right tang) unless it issue forth from a savory Spirit, from a Spirit truly leavened. He that learneth (after the rate of the gospel) sucketh in not the letter, but the Spirit of things. A true teacher doth generate or beget into the Spirit of truth, into the true nature of his own Spirit, and of that truth which cometh from his Spirit. Therefore a Disciple may be exceedingly prejudiced in his Spirit by false teachers, and had need be exceeding wary of them.

Object. Against this there lieth an objection very manifest, as thus. But is there any such danger in hearing of false Prophets? May not a man (especially such an one as is Spiritual) hear and try, chuse the good and refuse the evil? *Try all things* (saith the Apostle) *hold fast that which is good.*

Answer. To which I return these brief ensuing answers.

First, It is true, *He that hath ability may try any thing*; yet every one may try in part. But he that is weak (if he take upon him to try much) will quickly be overborn: nay he that is strong, will find it burthen some enough. It requireth a vehement straining of the senses; which to do frequently and intensely, is very troublesome and dangerous.

Secondly, *A man is leavened before he is aware.* It is the nature of *leaven* to leaven. It presently gets into the understanding and pollutes that, and into the affections and pollutes them too. *Touch pitch, and defilement will stick.* It is almost impossible (and the pain intolerable) of preserving ones Spirit pure from the

heaven of other Spirits, if we give them scope to tempt and lay their snares. *Lead us not into temptation.* Christ (who knew his Disciples weakness) taught them to pray, and accordingly he bids them also take heed thereof themselves, *Beware of false Prophets.*

Thirdly, *Trial of persons and things was far easier in those times; then now.* Persons who had a clear body of truth in their understandings, and were already leavened; who had such a sound inward constitution, and such good outward helps (as they had) might with more ease, advantage, and safety try, then we possibly can. And yet this trial among them, was to be in Gods way, and after Gods order: Not as if every one had liberty to try any thing whatsoever he would, in his own mind; but they were to use the help of one another in trying, and that according to that order which God had set up among them. For want of the spirit of truth (in such passages as these,) many poor souls drink in that from the letter of the Scriptures, which is enough to undo them.

VER. 17. *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

Even so. As the thorn or thistle bringeth not forth Grapes or figs (we know it so well, that we expect them not there:) no more can we expect to reap that which is spiritually good, from that which is spiritually evil. And that which is good and evil (in its several kinds) is known by its fruit, as wel as these are by theirs.

Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Every tree bringeth forth fruit according to its own nature,

nature: Thus it is in this outward World, and thus it is also more inwardly.

The spirit of man is a tree: A tree either of the *forrest*, or of Gods *garden*: A tree of righteousness, a tree of Gods planting, or a wild tree of unrighteousness. That Spirit which is leavened by the Spirit of the Lord, is a good tree: That Spirit which is leavened by Satan and its own corruption, is a corrupt tree.

Now answerably to the root and nature of the tree, there are fruits. There are fruits of Satan, fruits of darkness, fruits of the flesh: and there are fruits of God, fruits of light, fruits of his living and Holy Spirit.

And these fruits (of each sort) they alwaies spring from their proper root. That which is truly good and spiritual, springeth only from the good tree: That which is carnal and corrupt, as the best that is to be found in man is (his best desires, his purest endeavours, his faith, his love, his integrity, his innocency, &c.) springeth from the carnal tree: for *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*: That tree which is good in its own nature, frame and constitution, bringeth forth good fruit: That tree which is corrupt in its nature and state, bringeth forth corrupt fruit. That Prophet who hath the light of Christ in him, he prophesieth the truth: That Prophet which is a false Prophet, whose root in him is darkness (only finely painted and covered) he cannot prophesy aright, the truth cannot truly and purely issue out from him, he cannot bring forth this fruit. Though the thing be generally true (concerning every good tree, and every evil tree) yet it looketh here chiefly at this particular, upon occasion whereof it was spoken.

The Spirit of Christ bringeth forth the light of Christ, the life of Christ, the Nature of Christ in every spiritual appearance. (The nature of the root floweth forth in-

to the fruit :) But the dark spirit of man (even in its greatest appearances and discoveries of light) bringeth forth but darkneis and deceit.

VER. 18. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

THat which is good, can only flow from that which is good: and that which is evil, can only flow from that which is evil. The Spirit of the Lord cannot bring forth the fruits of corrupt man: nor can the vain Spirit of man bring forth any thing, that hath the true substance and life of God in it. A false Prophet cannot bring forth true light: nor can a true Prophet bring forth false light. (Alas, how miserably do we walk in dispensations, while our eye cannot cleerly see from whence to suck in our life!) Can a bitter fountain send forth that which is sweet? Or can a sweet fountain send forth that which is bitter? Can any thing give forth that which is not in it? Can any manner of evil in any kind, issue from the holy, the righteous, the perfectly good God? Can any manner of good issue from the purrified spirit of man or Satan? Can any root, that shoots up from God, be evil, or bring forth any evil? Can any root, that springs up from the spirit of man or Satan, be good, or bring forth good?

The Lord who hath truly severed Natures and Things (beginning with himself, and so proceeding on thorough al things) hath laid such a foundation hereof as cannot be shaken; but every thing is, must needs be, bring forth, and act, according to what it is. God himself, yea and all things may put on appearances, and seem variously both in their natures and motions; but yet they all still are, and act according to that nature and vertue which is in their proper root. Christ, who knew the truth in God, expressly affirmeth this, and that

that the contrary is impoſſible. Thus it is, ſaith he, and cannot be otherwiſe: *And good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

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VER. 19. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewen down and caſt into the fire.*

THis is the end of corruption. This is the end of it in every diſpenſation here, and in the iſſue or end of things hereafter. Every tree which is corrupt in any diſpenſation, goeth into the fire which is prepared for the corruption of that diſpenſation: yea that tree which may be good in one diſpenſation (and ſo may eſcape the fire thereof) may be corrupt in another diſpenſation (viz. in one more inward and ſpiritual) and ſo may more properly tend toward, and be caſt into an hotter fire.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit.

The righteous God loveth righteouſneſs. God is no reſpecter of perſons, but every one that feareth him and worketh righteouſneſs is accepted of him, and whoever is unrighteous is rejected by him. He walked with an even foot, toward all the people of the Jews under the Law: and he adminiſtreth things with an even hand to all the Diſciples and Chriſtians under the Goſpel. His eye is upon the whole earth, and upon every tree in it, dealing righteouſly with every one of them, according to the nature, truth, and degree of the eſtate and condition wherein he findeth them. For the general eſtate of men, he overlooketh it: but where the Goſpel commeth, he maketh quick work, ſuddenly ſealing men up either to death or life. His eye is intent upon this earth, and upon every plant and tree in it, upon which his word doth not fall in vain, but effecteth that for which he ſends it. How ſuddenly did Chriſt curſe the barren fig-tree? and how often did both Chriſt and his Apoſtles pronounce that

heavy doom againſt their hearers, *Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, &c.* So ſoon as ever the nature and ſetled courſe of death appears in any tree, the ſpirit of life may immediately (in the miniſtry of the Goſpel) give it up to that curſe which appertains unto it. The *Goſpel* is a *light* which cometh to ſearch, deſcry, diſcover things: to ſever them, and diſpoſe of them to their proper place.

Is hewen down and caſt into the fire.

This is the work of God in his diſpenſations, namely, to hew down corruption, and to haſten it into the fire. Look upon all the diſpenſations of God; they tend toward the deſtruction of that which is corrupt, and toward the ſalvation only of that which is pure. How did God pare away the people of the *Jews*, ſtill cutting off the corrupt part, and at laſt (the whole nation continually appearing ſo) cuts them all off. The ſame way taketh he with the *Gentiles*, and the Apoſtle (by the Spirit of the Lord, *Rom. 11.*) bids them beware of drawing upon themſelves the like *ſeverity*. This is done very imperfectly now, but there is a day wherein it ſhall be done fully and perfectly: wherein all the corruption which hath eſcaped under any diſpenſation (or may have lain deeper then the diſpenſation could reach) ſhall be called to account, and receive its due recompence of reward. There is a day of wrath for which all the wicked were made, and unto which they are all ordered. *Corruption* hath its root, its ſpringing up, its time of growth and bearing fruit; and then at laſt cometh the ſeaſon of the *axe* and the *fire*. Life and ſalvation is only for that which is good and doth good: Death and deſtruction is for every thing that is evil and doth evil, and ſhall aſſuredly overtake it. There is a *type* of this in every lively adminiſtration of the Spirit of the Lord; When the Spirit of the Lord cometh forth in any of his people

people, with light and power at any time, what work doth he make among men? how doth he *hew down* their spirits and *cast them into the fire of his wrath*, where they feel extream pain and anguish? This is an image (if not a true taste) of the fire of hell, into which the whole spirit of man (throughout the whole creation) shall be perfectly cast in that day, viz. in the great day of the Lord God Almighty.

VER. 20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

BEcause every thing bringeth forth fruit according to its nature, and cannot do otherwise: Seeing that which is good cannot possibly produce evil, nor can that which is evil bring forth good; Therefore distinguish but the fruits aright, understand but the fruits aright, and ye must needs know what the tree is. And when ye become once thoroughly exercised and expert in this kind; it will be as easy and natural to you to know where to expect and gather the light and life of God, as it is to natural men to know where to expect and gather Grapes or Figs. That tree can only bring forth good in a dispensation, which is it self good in that dispensation. Ye cannot gather any thing that is good in a dispensation, from that which is evil in that dispensation. The streams of light flow only from the fountain of life; and through those pipes alone which he sets up to convey them by, which are his own *Prophets* lighted by himself, and not false Prophets lighted by their own corrupt spirit and the subtile art of Satan.

VER. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.*

H *Heaven* is the proper center of reſt to ſpirits. *Heaven* is the only true Kingdom, wherein is the only true reign and enjoyment of life. *Heaven* is the only ſafe place; what ever is excluded thence, muſt needs be miſerable. The reſt, the peace, the joy, the delight of *Heaven* is every way deſirable.

This is the *Haven* toward which all travel, whither every weary ſpirit addreſſeth it ſelf for reſt. All ſorts of Diſciples which pretend to hearken to the voice of Chriſt, ſteer their courſe thitherward: but all ſhall not come thither. *Whoſoever calleth upon the name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved*; *Whoſoever doth this in truth*; *He that doth in truth call upon the true name of the true Lord ſhall be ſaved*, ſhall enter into the Kingdom: but not every one that ſeemeth to himſelf ſo to do ſhall be ſaved.

Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Men may own Chriſt for their Lord, calling upon his name, and yet he not own them, he not own their calling upon him. Man may do every thing after his faſhion, may ſtep every ſtep toward *Heaven* his way, and yet not ſtep one ſtep thitherward *Gods* way. He may *repent, beleerve, pray, hope, &c.* All theſe may he do in his own ſcale of judgment, and yet in *Gods* ſcale (or according to *Gods* ſcale) he may do none of theſe. Now certainly man can never walk in his own path to *Gods* Kingdom. He muſt come into *Gods* path, and walk by the line of his ſpirit, if he mean to enter within the verge of his holy land. It is a ſpiritual faith, a ſpiritual love a ſpiritual praying, hoping, &c. a faith and love from the Spirit, a faith and love of the ſame nature with the

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Spirit which is the life of God here, and which leads to the enjoyment of life here after.

Whoever beleeveth, shall be saved. Who ever runs to *Christ* and hangs upon him for life, shall be saved (*Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth*) This is most true. And yet this is as true, *not every one that faith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven:* not every one that hangs upon *Christ* for life, shall be owned or saved by him. And this, though so seemingly contrary, is very plain and easy: For the seed of *Christ* walks in the true path of *Christ*, and therefore must needs meet with the reward; but the Spirit of man (or the seed of man) walks but in the path of man (in mans path of *faith, love, holines, obedience, worship, &c.*) and therefore cannot attain that end which is peculiar to the nature and path of the other.

But he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

There is an holy will of God, an heavenly will of God, which his own nature alone delights in and fulfills. He who is born of God, who is of the same nature Spirit and life with him, cannot but do this will: but the shallow nature of man can by no means reach it. It is impossible for any of the creatures to reach the reason of man, the nature of man the Spirit of man in any of his motions; and therefore the creatures cannot possibly rise up to the life of man, or to the ends of man, which his capacity easily and most naturally advanceth him to. No more can man reach the reason of God, the nature of God, the life of God, the Spirit of God in any of his motions: and therefore man must needs fall short of his life and blessedness, in all that he is, and in all that he does. It is impossible for him to reach a further happiness then his own nature tends to (nay it is impossible for him so much as to recover himself into the line and path thereof) Man hath not a Spirit large enough for any thing that God

holds out : He can neither enter into the kingdom , nor receive any thing of the kingdom into himself. Mans nature is too narrow for every thing of this nature , and every thing of this nature is too large for mans nature. But , He that is of God , He that doth the works of God , He that fulfills the will of God , He who (by his fruit unto God) manifests his root to be from God , his nature and life to be the same with Gods ; he shall enter into that kingdom of heaven where in God now dwells , and which Christ hath himself received to prepare for all the seed.

He that is begotten of God as Christ is , he that naturally doth the will of God as Christ does , he shall be admitted by Christ into the kingdom of heaven , into that heavenly kingdom which God hath advanced him unto , and given him to dispose of to all such as become truly one with him.

VER. 22. 23. Many will say to me in that day , Lord , Lord , have we not Prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ?

And then will I Profess unto them , I never knew you : depart from me ye that work iniquity.

*C*Hrist intimateth here the great searchingness of his Spirit , and the exactness of his triall and judgment in the great day : For many trees which may have been very good , and may have passed very currant in dispensations (but to the eye of their own Spirits , and to the sense and judgment even of the best) shall then be found faulty , be disowned by Christ , be disappointed of that life and happiness which they look upon as their own , and also be delivered up into the power of that fire , which they confidently expected salvation from

from. This will be the condition not of a few, but of many. Of many that pretend to Christ, of many that have received great light and power from Christ, and have lived at a very high rate in this world, of many that verily beleeve they are in Christ, and think they have much to shew for their right to him and their interest in him, even of these many there will but a few be owned and saved by him. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, &c. And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, &c.*

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Christ hear layeth a foundation of rousing the secure Spirit of man, by battering his deepest bottoome where-upon he can build his hopes of security and life. Here is *great knowledge* of Christ, *great faith* and confidence in Christ, *great serviceableness* unto Christ, and that accompanied with *extraordinary power* from Christ. Here is a very strong and resolute claim of an interest in Christ, and of life and blessedness from him. These persons come here with the vigor of that faith, which few question but that it will save (namely beleeving him to be the Lord of life, and casting themselves upon him for life) and yet Christ, in the truth and purity of judgment, shakes these persons off.

We shal find Christ here, in these word (if we well consider them) shewing how far a man may go, from an outward work upon his Spirit, and by outward assistance from the Spirit of God (though both these in a sence may be justly called inward too) and yet fall short of the truth of life here, and of the possession of life hereafter.

In the first place, he may have a discovery of the true light, yea of the greatest light that ever hath been revealed

revealed, even the light of Christ; And this so full, so clear, so immediately from Christ, as that he may be able to hold it forth clearly and faithfully in the name of Christ. *Have we not prophesied in thy name?* Prophesying is the truest, the purest, the nakeddest, the most spiritual holding forth of the light of Christ. It is that with the Apostle preferreth far above other gifts, as more desirable, and as more useful and serviceable: *Follow after love*, saith he, *and desire Spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may Prophecy*, 1 Cor. 14. 1.

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Yea secondly, This man may be assisted and owned by Christ in his Ministry under him. Christ may enable him to *cast out devils in his name*. That power which enableth him to Prophecy, which directeth and assisteth him to hold forth truly the light of Christ, may enable him also to cast out devils. That virtue and power which was in Christ when he cast out devils, may be let out upon him, and the devils cannot but obey it, and give way whereover it appears.

Yea further, They may also be assisted to do *many wonderful works*, for the fuller evidence and confirmation of this truth which they have received and preach. They may *heal all manner of diseases, remove mountains, speak with all manner of tongues, interpret all Spirituall mysteries*, &c. (for what is too hard for that Spirit which is let out upon them?) Many wonderful things may they do, wonderful to the eye of nature, wonderful to the eye of reason, yea wonderful to the eye of their own Spirits. Many things may they do, by the power of Christs Spirit upon them, which they cannot understand at all, but only stand and wonder how they are wrought.

Yea yet further, which is included in all these, These persons may be converted, so far as they in the midst of all this light are able to judg, They may have from
Christ

Christ (from the very Spirit of Christ) that which they cannot but account true life, They may seem to themselves to have the true grace of faith; yea they may *taste of the heavenly gift, and of the powers of the world to come*; They may *believe*, They may *obey*, They may *walk in all the ways and ordinances of Christ*, making no question of the truth of the life in them, and of the sweet issue of it in the end; and yet the Lord Christ for all this, not own them at last, but disclaim the whole nature and courtesie of this their Religion.

This is necessarily comprehended in the former: For these persons (Prophecy in the name of Christ, knowing and teaching the way of life and salvation by his Spirit) cannot in reason be supposed to expect it any other way, but only by subjection to that light, which they held forth to others as the way to attain it by. Their *Prophecy in Christs name*, their *casting out of devils* and *doing of many wonderful works* by the same vertue and power, was to draw others to the yoke of faith and new obedience, which they could not but know to be the way to life: and therefore they having such light about them, and such power of the Spirit of Christ in them and with them, could not possibly make any question but that they themselves were evidently under the law and yoke of that life and Spirit. So that the argument of their confidence here is not grounded meerly upon their *Prophecy, or casting out of devils, or doing of wonderful works in the name of Christ*: but the force of the argument in all these lyeth in this, namely in its evidencing the truth of their light, the truth of their life, the truth of their faith, the truth of their obedience, which they take to be so cleer hereby, as they think it cannot be denied, no not by the piercing and unbiaised eye and judgment of Christ himself.

Many will say. This will the condition of many. There

are but a few that come in competition for life; and yet of these few, many that put in very hard for it will be laid aside. Many that have strong confidence in Christ, and very strong arguments to justify their light, to justify their Spirit, to justify their faith, to justify their claim to Christ, shall not be able to make it good, but shall with all this their confidence be thrust aside.

Many will say to me. They will keep up their confidence till they come into the presence of Christ, yea they will think themselves able (in that light, power, and Spirit which they have received) to make their plea good at the bar of Christs tribunal: They will come confidently with it to the judgment, and expect to have the truth of their life (with the Spiritual evidences thereof) owned. *Many will say to me;* They will not stick to come with this plea before me, and expect that I should have the same opinion and apprehension of it that they themselves have.

In that day. In this present day they may go on currently. In this day Christ will not discover any such thing to them; but they may have such gifts, and perhaps such presence of his Spirit also as they may seem, to themselves and the Saints, unquestionable: But at that day, which is the time of judging and distinguishing, Christ will judge and distinguish.

Lord, Lord. Mark, They are persons that have subjected to Christ in the lawes of his Spirit, in his ordinances and waies of worship; They come to him as to one who hath been their Lord, as to one toward whom they have alwaies behaved themselves (and that in an eminent manner too) as his subjects and servants.

Have we not Prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works?

They appeal to Christ concerning the truth of their light, concerning the truth of their grace, concern-

concerning the power and vertue of his Spirit in them and through them. Have we not had the true light in us? have we not truly beleev'd in it and obeyed it? have we not truly held it forth? didst not thou bear witness unto us in the services thou employedst us in? speak of our Lord Christ, and give forth a true testimony concerning thy servants, who now come to thee for the reward of thine own nature life and Spirit in them.

VER. 23. *And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

HERE was (immediately preceding) a very confident laying hold upon Christ, upon a thorow ground and acquaintance, as they themselves verily judged: and here is as confident a rejection and disclaim from the mouth and heart of Christ.

I never knew you, saith Christ unto these very persons.

All this knowledge of yours, all this faith of yours, all this great appearance of life in you was not the truth. Ye seemed to know me, but ye did not indeed know me. Ye seemed to be known by me and owned of me, but indeed I did not know you. I made use of you in a dispensation, and so far I owned you: I owned the truth of that which ye held forth from me; but I never knew you to be in true union with it, nay it was not truly natural in your Spirits. So that all these changes, all these courtes of yours in religion, all this conversion of others, all this faith and obedience in your selves, all your Prophecy and casting out of devils in my name and for my names sake, all that heat and warmth which ye found in your Spirits, in prayer, in any duties or ordinances, in any exercise of your graces, &c. Even all this was none of my life, was none of my Spirit, was none of my nature. If ye had been of me, if ye had

come from me, if ye had acted by the Spirit and principle of my life, I should have known you: but *I never knew you*. When ye were most pure, most spiritual, most lively, most believing in a duty, or in any motion for or toward me, yet even then I knew you not: yea I must now condemn (in the sight of Heaven and earth) that very duty, that very motion, and you for it, and with it. Consider well what kind of persons these were, what kind of light was in them, what kind of duties they might be supposed to perform, how high, how warm, how inward, how pure, how spiritual! how far the Spirit of Christ, which assisted them in Prophesying and casting out of devils, might also assist them in the goings forth of their Spirits, and in returns from Christ in o their Spirits! And yet notwithstanding all these things which passed between me and you, saith Christ, *I never knew you*. These were but things at a distance, there was no true natural union or communion between us, notwithstanding these.

Yea saith Christ, *Then will I Profess to them*, which intimates both their difficulty to believe it, and his resolution and stedfastness in it. They have believed it confidently hitherto, they never could doubt it as yet, yea even still they are hard to be beaten out of it, but that they are of Christ, and do belong to Christ, and must needs be owned by Christ. But saith Christ, *I will Profess to them*, I will be as serious and resolute in it as they can possibly be. I have my certainty as well as they theirs: and I will stand to it before God, men, and Angels, that I never had any knowledge of them as mine. I will shake them off with as firm and fixed a resolution, as they can possibly lay claim to me with.

I will Profess unto them, I never knew you.

I do not disown you in design (as formerly I did my dearest people, for their exercise, under their dispensation)

fations:) but from my very heart, from my very nature, to which ye have alwaies been strangers, even in your greatest intimacies with me. I know well enough what ye have been, what ye have done, how abundant your knowledge, how vigorous your faith, prayers, &c. have been: but I have not known you in all these. Of a truth your life is not mine, your nature not mine, your spirit not mine: your root and fruit in your whole course of Religion hath been none of mine. *The son of the bond-woman* hath been much elevated and raised to great hopes in you, but ye are not my seed, ye are none of my begetting in the true nature, life and spirit of my Father, and so ye may not sit down with me, as my children and off-spring, in my Fathers Kingdom.

Then, Then will I profess unto them, &c.

When it will be of most advantage to be owned, when they have finished their course, and come to the end of their race, expecting very confidently the crown, Christ will then disown them utterly. In that day when they think to enter into life and blessedness with Christ, when they come for the reward of all their faith, of all their duties, of all their services, of all their afflictions and persecutions, and all this by vertue of their interest in Christ, even then will Christ disclaim them, Then will he profess to them, *I never knew you*. It is not of so much matter now to be disowned, nay it may be better now for the house of *Jacob* to have the face of God hid from them, then manifested to them: yea in this day did God hide his face from his own Son, and behaved himself toward him as one that knew him not. But in that day, when the Son shall be owned by the Father, and all the seed by the Son, it will be lamentable with those from whom Christ turns his face, with those to whom Christ professeth that he never knew them.

Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Depart from me.

Christ, not knowing of them, turns them off: (for he will then receive in nothing into his congregation, but what the Father, himself, and all the seed shall own.) Get ye gone, ye have no right, no portion here. What should ye do with the crown of life? Ye never had the true life in you. Ye are not heirs, and therefore may not inherit. The same nature and spirit which engageth me to take in my flock, engageth me to keep you out. Go to your own place, among your own company, get ye gone from me. Ye are none of mine, ye appertain not to me (ye are but hangers on, ye are none of the natural branches and therefore have no share in my Kingdom, in my inheritance: *Depart from me.*

Ye that work iniquity.

If ye would know the reason why I thus turn you off, contrary to your hopes and expectations, why this it is, ye are workers of iniquity. This is *the holy place, the holy land of God*; but ye are *uncircumcised and unclean*, and therefore may not enter. Ye are *sinners, unclean, unwashed in heart and life*, ye are *workers of iniquity*. There hath been an ill root, a secret root of bitterness under all your Religion, under all your devotion, under all that power of the spirit wherewith ye have been clothed: So that ye have been *sinful and the servants of sin*, under all the appearance of your subjection to me. It is true, ye have seemed to the World to have been workers of holiness and righteousness, yea ye have looked upon your selves as dead unto sin and alive unto me: but now my spirit cometh to search, it plainly findeth out the nature and spirit of sin in you, it discovereth you to be the workers of iniquity.

And this is the true nature of corrupt man: He will enter into any form of Religion with great life and power, but he will bend it aside to the flesh, and make even the purity thereof to serve his corrupt flesh: So that in
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the midst of al his fighting against sin and for God, he is a servant to sin and an enemy to righteousness. There is no strain or motion of Religion, which the spirit of man cannot enter into, and bend it aside toward his own corruption. He can nourish his pride, his self confidence, &c. under humility and faith toward God: He can hook in the liberty of his spirit unto vanity, under the liberty of the Gospel: He can be very vile and filthy in his heart under the purest form of Religion, under the highest exercise of his spirit in devotion and mortification. Thus can he maintain the root of iniquity, live in iniquity, work iniquity, &c. and that so subtilly that that the spirit of another Saint, nay his own spirit cannot discern it: but he looketh upon himself as holy, as redeemed by Christ, and belonging to his Kingdom, until Christ at last uncover him by his light and disown him, saying, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

But against this, considered with that which went before in the 18. verie, there seemeth to lye a very strong objection.

Object. But were not these persons corrupt trees? and how then could they bring forth good fruit? Such fruit as the Lord should own, as it seemeth he did them in the day of their prophesying, casting out of Devils, and doing wonderful works in his name? If they were such corrupt trees, as Christ here professeth them to be, could they bring forth good fruit? If they did not bring forth good fruit (if they did not Prophecy the truths of the Gospel, according to the will and dispensation of Christ) would God have enabled them to cast out Devils, and do many wonderful works in Christs name? If they were good trees and did bring forth good fruit, how can Christ disown them here, and profess to them he never knew them, when as his own spirit did thus enlighten them, accompany them, and act in them?

This

This is the strength of the objection. Whereunto may be replied, by way of answer, as followeth.

Ans. Tis true, This their fruit was good in its kind; and the root from which this fruit sprang was good also. This gift in them, this light and power of Christ upon them, from whence this fruit did flow, was good. The spirit, which was in conjunction with them in the exercise of this gift, though he was not in conjunction with them in his own nature, is holy and good: and so their fruit (in this way of dispensation) was good, proper and profitable. Although this fruit, not flowing from their own spirits, will not be laid to their account, but they themselves were still evil in & under it. Or thus,

Such a person may be a good tree in respect of the present indwelling of the spirit in him, and his present change by it, together with his communion with it, and power from it, which may be let out upon him for a present end and service, though he be not at all good in his own inmost nature. He may be sanctified at present for a *Prophet* of the Lord, and so be holy and good according to the nature and kind of that sanctification: and yet not at all sanctified, not at all good, not at all holy in another kind, and according to another measure. Thus the *Priests* of the Lord in that dispensation of the Law, might be holy, good and useful there: and yet unholy and sinful by the measure of the Gospel. And thus also the *Prophets* of the Gospel may be outwardly sanctified by the spirit, yea may have an inward life and power of the spirit within, and yet want the true root of life. Or thus, The truth may break forth through such an one, from a true root which at present is in him; and yet he himself not be in true union with that root. He may teach and hold forth the truth from an illumination of the spirit, and yet not partake of the true virtue and power of it in his own spirit.

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Such a tree must needs bee good now, among the Sinners, in the judgment of their light, in the present dispensation wherein they are now to walk; and so such are now to be owned by the Lords People as true Prophets of the Lord: though in the light of the Lord their spirits will be found defective, and their work blameworthy in reference to their own spirits, how justifiable soever it was as it came from the spirit of the Lord, which wrought in them.

VER. 24. *Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings, of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock.*

T *Herefore.* Because of the strictness of the Spirit of Christ in judgment, because of the certain miscarriage of many in all their undertakings and services for Christ, because of their missing of life who do not only run hard, but also seem in a very fair (yea infallible) way of attaining; *therefore* doth Christ here give forth this weighty and quickening resemblance.

Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them.

As Christ hath a tongue, and a voice: so there is an ear that heareth him, and an heart that observeth his sayings. Man cannot hear Christ, Man cannot receive the Gospel of Christ: Only *the poor*, such as are broken and stripped of the life and excellency of man; they alone hear Christ, they alone *receive the Gospel*.

And what they hear, they do. There is a spirit of life in them, which waiteth for light and direction from the spirit of life in Christ: and so soon as ever it heareth, it doth. It is as natural to the spiritual hand to execute, as it is to the ear to hear. If it were possible for man to hear, yet could he not receive: The word cannot enter into his heart, into his spirit, and therefore it cannot

bring forth fruit. Indeed it doth ſometimes enter into the outwardneſs of his heart and ſpirit, and accordingly brings forth fruit there (it may root it ſelf, ſhoot up and make a fair ſhew there:) but it cannot enter into the inwardneſs of his nature, it cannot root it ſelf deep enough to bring forth the true, eternal, abiding fruit. But there are a flock of ſheep, belonging to Chriſt, which hear his voice: There is a climate where his ſound is underſtood. *No man receiveth his testimony*, no old man any where: but he which is born of God, *the new man* every where doth. What ever the Spirit of Chriſt directs, the heart of the true beleever catcheth and cannot but obſerve: He *heareth his ſayings*, and *doth them*. Thus he doth in the time of his life; yea and in the time of his death and captivity too, though after an inſenſible and hidden manner. He feedeth the hungry, he clotheſh the naked, he viſiteth the ſick, &c. (according as he is inſtructed and led by the ſpirit of Chriſt:) though in ſuch a way as he himſelf doth not perceive that he doth it, which is implied in his reply to Chriſt, *Lord when ſaw we thee in hungry and fed thee, &c.* Mat. 25.

I will liken him unto a wiſe man.

The children of God, although they be fools in this World, as they needs muſt, having the principle of Worldly wiſdom broken in them: yet they have a principle of ſpiritual wiſdom, which maketh them truly wiſe toward God. And when the measure of true wiſdom cometh forth, they ſhall appear the only wiſe; as now, the measure of true wiſdom being hid, they appear the only fools. But how fooliſh ſoever they are in their carriage here, (in reſpect of the things and affairs of this World, and their own content and ſafety in it:) yet in reſpect of the things of God, in reſpect of the things of life, in reſpect of the things of eternity they are deeply wiſe. Chriſt who hath given them a principle

of wisdom, who knoweth their nature and Spirit, who eyeth the strength and course of this principle in them. This is his judgment of them, this is the resemblance which he giveth of them, he likeneth them to wise men. He knoweth they have the substance of that wisdom in them, whereof the wisdom of this World is but a shadow. What the men of this World seem to be, but are not; they are, though they appear not so to the World. They have the root of true wisdom in them well rooted, wisely rooted; and they bear fruit wisely. The reason why the World accounteth them fools, is because they see not the nature and course of their Spirits.

Which built his house upon a rock. Which built.

The great art of man lies in building. This is mans great point of wisdom, to rear up a building answerable to his Spirit, and to found it well. There is no building like that of Religion; nothing of so excellent a nature, nothing of so excellent materials, nothing like it for duration. Now he is wise indeed who founds this house well, who builds his faith, his love, his hope, his peace, his joy, &c. upon a sure bottom.

His house. That which man desires and delights chiefly to build is his house, an house for himself to dwell in, an house fit for the nature and State of his own Spirit. Every man hath his own religion in the nature of his Spirit, and like a spider he weaves his own web; he weaves an house out of himself for himself to dwell in. When a man sees his need of faith, of love, of obedience, of joy, of hope, of fear, of exercises of devotion, &c. presently he draweth these things out of himself, and reareth up a building of these for himself. Alas, what do men in their several wates of Religion, but rear their own fabricks: They raise up houses and buildings to themselves under the name of houses and

buildings of God, and for God. The *Jewes* in their day were great builders, crying up *the Temple of the Lord*, and yet rejecting *Christ* the only corner stone. And thus is it to this very day, *Christ* is still the stone which the Religious builders refuse.

Upon a rock. A rock is a firm foundation, there is no fear of its falling. There is a rock for the Religion and devotion of Spirits, a rock for the house of God, a rock for every mans building in God. Now he who finds this rock, and builds his house there upon, is wise; which he that heareth, and obeyeth the Spirit of Christ, doth. He must have a bottom in God, who knoweth, who heareth, who observeth the sayings of God. He who is not truly wise and spiritual, cannot grow out of God, cannot receive in or bring forth any thing of God. He therefore that can answer the touches of the Spirit of Christ in any dispensation, he that can receive in and bring forth the life of them, he doubtless hath the nature virtue and power of the true wisdom of Christ in him.

VER. 25. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

There are inward storms and tempests, where in the violence of rain, floods, and winds, doth assault and try the nature and strength of mens buildings in Religion. Whereof there are two kinds, Some from the Spirit of the Lord, and some from Satan. Satan, he assaulteth and beateth hard upon the true spiritual buildings: and the Lord, he assaulteth and beateth hard upon such fleshly buildings, as seem to be spiritual, but are not. *There is a consumption determined from the Lord upon all flesh,* and he leitteh forth sufficient force of his Spirit

Spirit to effect it. *All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field; which soon appeareth, when the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.*

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.

No sooner is the house of God built, but immediately it is assaulted by Satan. Though it be built upon the rock, yet that will not secure it from Satans storming of it. It is the pleasure of the Lord to have the nature, virtue and strength of the buildings and foundation of his son and Spirit, tried to the utmost. The Lord delighteth to suffer nothing to stand, which any strength can break down. It is not an accidental pleasure, but the very nature of the Lord to have all his buildings tried by Satan, by the strength of the Spirit of Satan: and to try all Satans buildings by the strength of his own Spirit. Satan hath the dispose of mighty rains, floods and winds; and it is no house for God, which any of these or all these can overcome.

And it fell not. No power can shake or disettle the life of Christ, or the buildings which he raiseth in mens Spirits by his own Spirit. He that is wise in the wisdom of Christ, and builds upon his Spirit in the truth, all the powers of darkness (even in their very hour) shall not be able to prevail against him: but what is thus built shall stand, maugre all opposition. All storms and tempests, winds, floods and rains, can only shew the excellency of its nature, the unconquerableness of its life and Spirit. All the strength of Satan, in its greatest elevation, cannot shake this life, no not in its poorest meanness and lowness.

It fell not. Here is the stability of the life of Christ. Here is the sweet issue and proper effect of true wisdom. It prepareth so effectually against storms, that when they come they cannot avail to prejudice it. That build-

ing which is wisely fortified a forehand, is not to be overcome by that strength against which it was so fortified.

For it was founded upon a rock.

This is the great reason of the stability of the life of Christ, not merely because it comes from Christ, but because it is also fastened upon Christ. It is fixed upon the root of eternity in God through Christ. This life, this principle of wisdom is not like *Adams*, to go out and live of it self; but it clings to the root, and builds every thing upon the root: So that nothing can prevail against that, or overcome that, but what can prevail against and overcome the root. That which cannot shake the life of Christ in Christ, cannot shake that life of Christ in his people which is bottomed upon him, which floweth from him, and which he is in. If the rock and building be truly united in their nature, in their Spirit, in their motions; then nothing can prevail against the one, which doth not prevail against the other. Nothing can prevail against the building, which doth not prevail against the rock, because of the union. The strength of the building ariseth from the foundation, especially in this case, where the foundation is of such a nature, that it floweth up into the building. This rock is spiritual, this rock is ascending: what ever is built upon it, it floweth up into it. There is not one stone, nor one motion, nor one operation built upon this rock, in which the rock it self it not to be found: So that in every thing that is spiritual, there is the whole strength, the whole weight, the whole stability of Christ, then which, nothing is stronger, for he is the very strength of God.

VER. 26. *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand.*

There is a double kind of hearer hinted at in this place; *An inward, and an outward hearer: an hearer with the new ear, and an hearer with the old ear.* There is the sence of hearing in the new nature, in the renewed Spirit, and the sence of hearing in the old nature, or in the Spirit of man.

He who hath *the new life and the new ear* in him, he heares wisely, he hears understandingly; in his hearing, such life and power enters into him, that that which he hears becomes one with him. It is true life, true substance, which enters into him at the ear of his Spirit.

But now *the old man*, which is only a little stirred and rowled by the noise of the Spirit of Christ, and only so far changed as the seriousness and industry of his own Spirit can advance him, he doth not receive the true power of that which he hears: That which he hears is not truly one with him, and therefore cannot truly spring forth from him, it not truly entering into him. This man, though he doth every thing after a sort, yet he doth nothing in the truth. He may indeed do many things (after his way) according to the letter, but nothing from and in and according to the Spirit: So that his hearing is not hearing, and his doing is not doing. Christ doth not here (in this concession of his) justify his hearing; but he doth except against that which is more visibly defective, even to himself. The Spirit of man is better at hearing (even in his way of hearing) than at doing: but with the true life both are equally easie. It is nothing to the new man to hear what Christ saith, no nor yet to observe what he prescribes. It is as natural to him to take in and bring forth the Spirit and life of Christ, as it is to Christ to let it out upon him. So that the new man in Christ is the only true hearer and performer of the will and doctrine of Christ.

Yet

though

Yet the old man, the Spirit of man, he also will be an hearer, and there he will pass pretty well: but when he comes to doing (falling short of the true life and power of Christ in his Spirit) there he is more sensibly pulled. So that he may be said to hear, (that may be granted) but not to do: The denial of that may be made good even to his own soul and conscience. And if he search into his heart, he may find that though he knoweth not the will of Christ, yet that which he taketh to be the will of Christ he cannot naturally perform. Yet let not any of the true seed be disturbed at this (which the consideration of this in the Spirit of man, and not in the true light, may occasion) for there is a great deal of difference between a true nature kept off from the exercise of its life by obstruction, and the unnaturalness of the old Spirit of man, though led on in the external exercise of life by an outward power of the Spirit; the kindest motion of the one being as unnatural, as the forbearance of the other is. I term that power of the Spirit wherewith he is invested (with all the effects thereof) outward, although it be in him; because it is not within him, not within his nature, but only as it were the garment of his Spirit: Yet also causing an influence, warmth and life within, which is true in its kind, as also the nature and all the powers of man are in their kind; but it is not of the true kind, it is not of the true inward substance of the new life.

The Spirit of man (this kind of hearer) he also will be a builder. He is as busy about his religion, as busy about raising up an house to God, as busy about the ordinances of Christ, as busy about gathering together a body of truth within him, wherein his Spirit may be built up, as any whatsoever. There is no material mentioned in the scriptures, but this man will bring into his building. He will cast off that which he calls the old man, and it shall

shall be all new: his *foundation* new, his *superstruction* new. It shall be only *Christ*, whole *Christ*, the *death* of *Christ*, the *resurrection* of *Christ*, the *righteousness* of *Christ*, the *promise* of *life* by *Christ*, that he will build upon: And his *faith*, his *repentance*, his *love*, his *hope*, his *joy*, his *obedience*, &c. shall be all new: and truly a very glorious fabrick will man thus raise. Yea every Sect of men (since the great and universal apostacy from the life of *Christ*) what outward glorious buildings of *doctrine*, *worship*, and *devotion* have they reared, to which, they which are of the same Spirit with them, fall down and worship, crying it up for the Truth, the Church, the worship, the way to salvation, the only path to true present enjoyment, and to the future possession of life and blessedness.

But the Spirit of man in his greatest wisdom, and under his greatest changes even under the breaking forth and manifestation of the light of *Christ*, as it did in those dayes) is still foolish, hath not the true wisdom of God, and cannot find out the true foundation. There is no man, without the light of the Lord in himself, can see or hear the light or truth in the voice of *Christ*. He heareth the outward sound, which is very glorious to his outward senses, in so much as he cannot but say, *Master thou art a teacher come from God, and teachest the truth*: but he doth not see nor understand the nature and Spirit of that truth, which he seemeth thus to acknowledge and to be thus taken with: And so he doth not build upon the true *Christ*, upon the true rock: but upon a sandy conception and imagination of his own concerning the truth. He thinks that he hath the true faith, and layeth true hold upon the true *Christ*, and doth truly repent of his old nature Spirit and conversation, and that he doth truly love the life of *Christ*, and truly walk in the waies of *Christ*: but he will find, when the nature of his Spirit and the nature of things cometh to be open-

ed, that he was mistaken. This, which he builds, is not the truth: and that foundation upon which he built, was not the rock, but meer sand; which was nevertheless so in its own nature for his confident judging, of it to be otherwise.

The sand is a slight, slippery, washy foundation, not fit to support a great building: no more is that knowledge of Christ, upon which the Spirit of man builds, fit to support the building of truth, or the great fabrick of life and salvation. And as weak and foolish as it is for any man to build an house upon the sand; so foolish is it for any Spirit thus to build.

Now it being very hard for man to discern what he doth in this particular, *Christ* doth here intimate a direction to him, he hints at the best way for a man to discover what his foundation is, which to be done by observing the strength which flows therefrom into him. If he find the life of Christ natural unto him, and naturally springing up in him, then doubtles he is built upon Christ. If he naturally hear and obey the voice of the Spirit of Christ (if the Spirit in him be willing, though the flesh be never so weak) then doubtles he hath the nature of Christ in him. If he can but look into this Sermon of Christs, and find the nature, heart, and Spirit of it in him, find Christ speaking it all over in his soul, and secretly cherishing it in him (although through some present force and extremity, it might be hindered from a present visible springing forth) yet thereby may he feel and know Christ to be at the bottome. But if a mans heart, Spirit, and nature stand at a distance from these things, though he may strive never so hard in the outward observation and practise of them, yet he is but this foolish builder which builds all this upon the sand.

VER. 27. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*

Here is no house, no spiritual building, which shall escape untried. The house upon the rock, shall not be spared because of that everlasting strength whereon it is bottomed, and which springeth up in it; nor shall the house built upon the sand (whose materials also are answerable thereto) be pitied or spared because of its weakness: For the Spirit of the Lord and of Satan both agree in this, to throw down of one anothers fabricks what they can.

Every mans *nature*, every mans *light*, every mans *grace*, every mans *work*, in every kind must be tried. There is a *rain*, a *flood*, and *winds* (yea not only watery, but also fiery forces and assaults) which *descend*, *come*, and *blow* upon the fabricks of mens Spirits. There is no peace neither to the wicked, nor to the righteous, in this day of temptation. Indeed in places and times of darkness, both the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit of Satan lye still: but when there is any eminent building raised by either, they soon fall to work to search the nature and strength of it. When once an house in this kind is built, suddenly *the rain ascends, the floods come, and the winds blow*.

There are temptations, trials, batteries and assaults from all quarters; so that if there be any flaw in the building, any defect or weakness in the foundation, it will be discovered and found out either by the *rains* from above, or by the *floods* from beneath or by the *winds* in the open aire. Mark how the whole building is assaulted at once, the upper part of it by the *rains descending*, the foundation by the *floods coming*, and

the middle part by the *winds blowing*. Wonderful sharp and furious are the assaults of the Lord and of Satan on these kind of buildings! *Job* who had no part left whole in him, but was surrounded with affliction, was but a type and pattern of it. The very victory of Christ himself (and so of all his seed, who have the same life and Spirit in them) was sufficiently bloody.

Well, what was the issue of these storms on this house built on the sand? why the next words tell you, they procured its ruin, they caused its downfall, by the force of them it fell.

And it fell. This house was not able to withstand the fierceness of these assaults; but the *ruin* beat it down, the *winds* blew it down, the *floods* washed away its foundation immediately. Alas, the violence and fury of the *Eternal* will quickly dash in peeces all the buildings of mans Spirit! One puff of his Spirit, one blast of his no. ethrils will throw down all mans *faith* and *repentance*, *love*, *hope*, *joy*, *rest*, *peace*, yea all his knowledg of and interest in Christ. What is not well founded, even in the nature and Spirit of the Lord himself, cannot but fall in the trial and before the strength of the Lord. *All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.* Yea not only poor weak mans, but the very flesh of *Christ* was but *grass*, and the endowments of his nature and mind but *as the flower of the field*, which fell down upon the earth, withered and sunk into the grave, in the day of their trial.

And great was the fall of it.

The fall of such buildings is very great. It is not a slip, but a fall; nor a small fall, from which there may be a recovery; but a great fall, an utter fall, an irrecoverable fall. And this is not all neither, but it is a fall proportionable to the building.

Mens buildings in Religion are commonly great, where men are very serious and industrious. Abundance of *faith*, of *hope*, of *repentance*, of *love*, of *joy*, of *graces*, of *duties*, of *Spiritual exercises* doth the strict man build with, and heap into his building. Now for all these (with the very roor and foundation of them all) to tumble down, to break all in peeces, so as they can never be gathered together any more, this must needs be a great fall.

O the great, the dreadful, the dismal falls that will be (in Religion) of all those *buildings*, of all those *Spirits*, of all those *motions* and *operations* which are not founded upon God, and wrought in God! There is no loss in this World that can deerve to be a compleat shadow of it. When men that were so rich in the things of God, so rich in hopes, so abundant in lively duties; grown so high in knowledg, experiences, graces, yea all manner of exercises and excellencies in Religion, shall have all this perfectly tumbled down in one moment, and their Spirits overwhelmed in the ruins of it! Yet this will be the condition of all those houses which are not founded upon the true rock, which are not truly built up in and by the Spirit of the Lord.

VER. 28. *And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.*

THIS was one effect of Christ preaching, upon the people. When they began to look back and consider what he had spoken, and the manner of it; it made them amazed: they were not wont to hear such kind of preaching. They were not wont either to hear such kind of things, or things taught after such a manner. Mens speaking of the things of God may tickle the ear, nay it may affect the heart (for the Spirit of

man, or the wisdom of man, may have strong influence upon the heart of man:) but the breaking forth of the light of Christ, with the life and Spirit of Christ, this will astonish man. He doth not hear the things of God so taught, by any ordinary kind of teachers in any dispensation. This light, this instruction, this teaching, this doctrine is such in its nature, and so comes forth, after such a manner, so lively and quick from the Spirit, that it cannot but amuse the hearers.

VER. 29. *For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.*

THIS is the reason why men were astonished at his doctrine and manner of teaching, because of the majesty, because of the authority, because of the unusualness of it. He taught other-ghes doctrine then the *Scribes* taught, and like another-ghes manner of teacher then the *Scribes* were. He came from God with the word of God; and he came in his name, and with his authority and majesty. He did not come with a traditional knowledge, nor did he teach after a traditional manner: but as he received the message & mind of God, from God himself, so he delivered and gave it forth with the stamp and authority of God upon it. He did not speak after the manner of man: but as in the name, so with the majesty and authority of the Lord. There is a majesty and authority in truth, when it appears in its own garb and likeness. When a man speaks from a root, when he speaks from light, and knoweth how to direct his words to the light which is left remaining (and hereby stirred up) in the heart and conscience of another, thereby he stuns and subjects the Spirit of another unto his doctrine and teaching. He that is a teacher should be able to comprehend the Spirit of his scholar, and to suit his doctrine,

doctrine, instructions and directions, to his nature, condition and capacity. Christ was such a teacher, as was taught by God both to understand his own message, and his Schollars whom he was to instruct therein. He was a *Sherpherd* fully instructed in the leading, ordering and guiding of his *flock*: yea and he knew how to behave himself toward the *Wolves* and toward the *goats*, as well as toward the *Sheep*. Christ came not only with a commission (which man could not know otherwise then by the effects) but with a power of light, with the *demonstration of the spirit*, reaching the very hearts and consciences of men with his doctrine. He came not with received principles of man (as all other teachers were fain to do: but with the truth wherewith he was entrusted, commanding its entrance from its own light and authority. He led his Apostles the track wherem they were all to follow him, *viz.* in speaking the naked truth of God, to the light of every mans conscience in the sight of God. This, and this, he knew to be the truth; this, and this he held out to be the mind of God; this, and this, he sufficiently evidenced from God sundry waies, and let men embrace or reject it at their peril. Such was his doctrine, such his manner of teaching. *Iesus* cried, and said, *He that beleeveth on me, beleeveth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the World, that whosoever beleeveth on me, should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words and beleeve not, I judg him not; for I came not to judge the World, but to save the World. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, bath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judg him in the last day. For I have not spoken of my self; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandement what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandement is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the*
Father

Father said unto me, I speak. (Joh. 12. 44. &c.) wondrous Majesty! yea there was a sweet Majesty and authority in all the doctrine and demeanour of Christ, even in his very entreaties, tears, and lamentations over lost man, as may easily be observed by him that readeth and considereth them.

He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

Why how did the *Scribes* teach? They taught according to that light and knowledge of the Law, which they had attained by their own study and experience. (And at this rate is all the teaching of man: He can teach no better then he learns, He can teach after no deeper certainly then sits within his line and measure. He can hear the things of God with no other ear then he hath, and he can teach no further then he hears.) But Christ, who is after another way sent out by God, who is anointed by God, taught by him, whose ear God openeth (*he hath opened mine ear to hear as the learned*) he teacheth after another manner, even *with authority, and not as the Scribes*. He teacheth differently in these four respects.

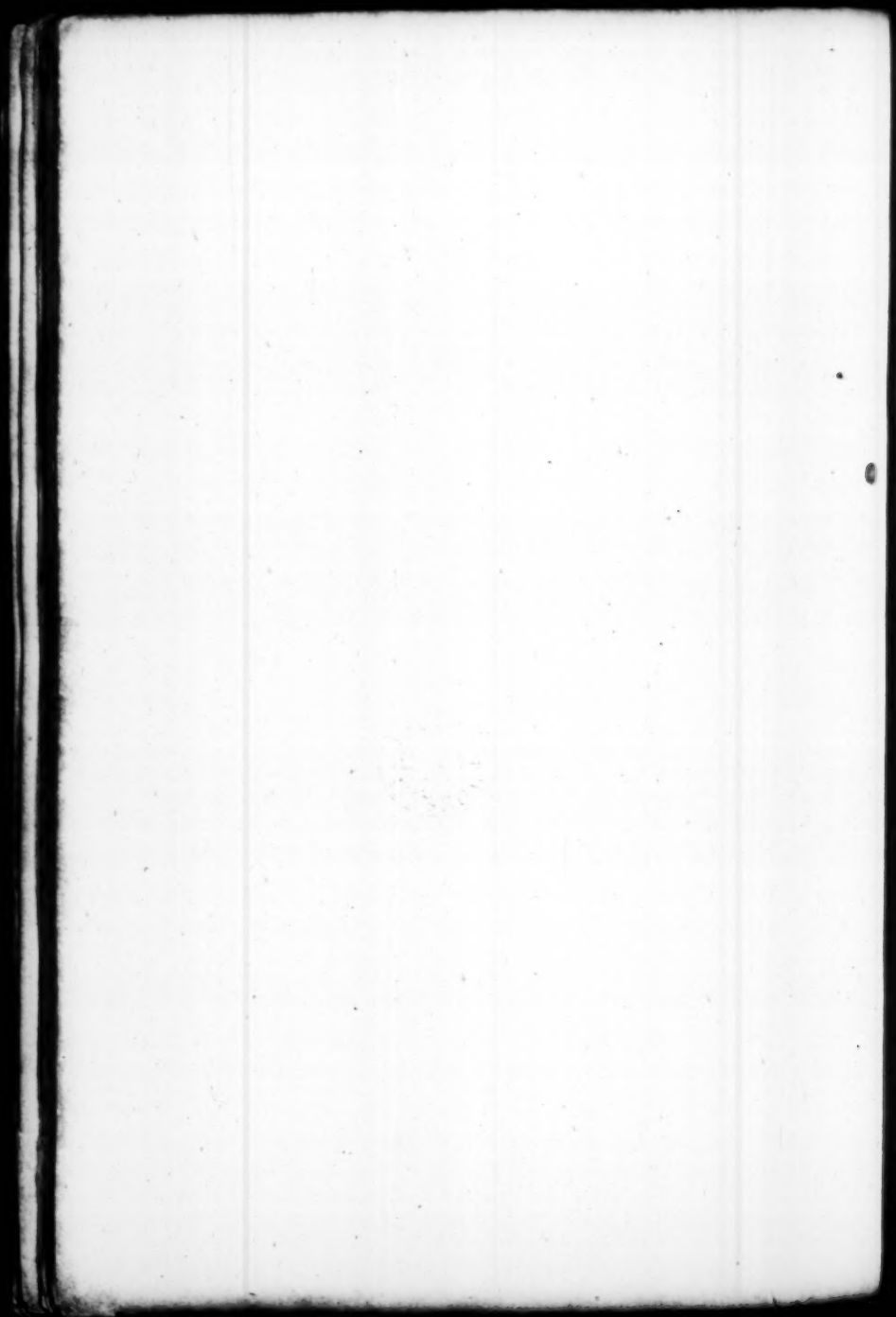
1. There is a different light held out by him then others have. He teacheth in the light of the Lord. There are the sparklings of the Spirit of the Lord in all his doctrines.

2. He teacheth different things then others teach. He did not teach such a kind of doctrine as the *Scribes*. He did not teach such a flat, such a literal, such a fleshly doctrine as the spirit of man might readily fall in with: but a lively, inward, spiritual doctrine, such as came from the living Spirit of the Lord, and such as only they that are alive in the Lord can hear.

3. He did not teach so flatly, so literally, so dead-like as the *Scribes*: but his words came forth with life and power. He spake with spirit, he spake with life; and
he

he put life and spirit into his words, into his doctrine; *the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.* Alas how flat and dead are the speeches of man about the things of God! But when God speaks, when the Spirit of the Lord speaks, he speaks forth life. No less then life came forth in the words of Christ, and it came forth most livingly.

4. He managed his doctrine skillfully, so as to direct and carry it home to the hearts and souls of those to whom he spake. He knew how to wound the hoary scalp of the most subtle sinner: and he knew how to heal the deepest wound of the most afflicted soul: But alas the poor *Scribes*, they knew not how to reach the spirit of man! They knew not how truly to wound or truly to cure! Somewhat indeed they can do (in their own rode) toward those spirits that are subjected to them, but nothing in the truth. Let a soul be thoroughly sound, they know not how to wound him: or let a soul be thoroughly wounded, they know not which way to go about to releeve him. *O Lord, when shall he appear who can teach with authority, who can wound as Ioue with authority (and not as the Scribes!) who can bring forth the true light and life of God in its own naked Majesty, and can sow it and cause it to spring up in the desolate spirit of man! Send forth, O God, this teacher, and prepare us as we are to hear his doctrine. Amen.*



The sum or substance OF JERUSALEMS SONG OF TRIUMPH,

Upon the birth of her first-born Son,
(whom she long asked, and at length,
by faith joyned with fervent prayer,
obtained of God) represented in a fi-
gure from the ten first verses of the
second Chapter of the first book of
Samuel.

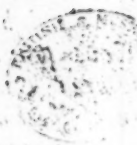
GALATH. 4. 29, 30.

*But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him
that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.
Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bond-
woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall
not be Heir with the son of the free-woman.*

LONDON, Printed by John Macock, 1655.

Upon the first of April
 I received from you a letter
 dated the 28th of March
 which was duly forwarded
 to the proper authorities
 and they have been
 very kind to send me
 a copy of the same.
 I am, Sir,
 Very respectfully,
 Your obedient servant,
 J. M. Smith.

208 25 1/2 11 1/2 11 1/2



London, 1. 1. 1872.

1 SAMUEL, CH. 2. VER. I. TO II.

ANd Hannah prayed, and said, my heart rejoiceth in the Lord: mine borne is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies: because I rejoyce in thy salvation.

2. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

3. Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth, for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

4. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled, are girt with strength.

5. They that were full, have hired out themselves for bread: and they that were hungry, ceased: so that the barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children, is waxed feeble.

6. The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

7. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the begger from the dunghill, to set them among Princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lords, and he hath set the world upon them.

9. He will keep the feet of his Saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail.

10. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of Heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and he shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his Anointed.

T H E P R E F A C E,

Relating to the History in the former Chapter.



GOD hath two Wives, which have each of them their several Wombs, from whence the two seeds issue. His Wives are Sarah and Hagar, Hannah and Peninnah, the *Jerusalem above* and the *Jerusalem beneath*. The wombs also are two, answerable to the mothers, viz. *the womb of nature, and the womb of grace; the wisdom of the flesh, and the wisdom of the spirit.*

length The Lord loved and delighteth in one of these Wives chiefly, and his eye and heart is upon the fruit of her womb. She is his darling, his dearly beloved one: but for all that, the other as yet hath most children by him. She which is after the flesh bringeth forth a numerous seed, she which is after the Spirit is barren. She cannot yet conceive nor bring forth her seed, nor can her seed (so far as it is conceived and formed) live out of her womb.

any As it is with the mother, so it is with her child: As it is with the womb, so it is with the seed. The seed of nature, the spirit of man, the wisdom of man, the reason of man can grow and thrive any where in this earth. Put him into way of Religion, he can go through with it, both in the knowledge and practise of it, after his manner

manner. But as the womb of the true life is barren, so her seed is likewise unfruitful. It lieth buried in her womb, it cannot come forth, it cannot live, it cannot thrive. There is no Religion, no knowledg, no practise which it can go through with.

And indeed, as the child is not yet born: so his food is not yet prepared for him. The Religion, the life, the holiness which lieth within mans reach, as there is abundance of it, so there is abundant food and nourishment for it (Which way soever the spirit of man can go forth, he may find a great deal of suitableness and satisfaction.) But that Religion, that life, that holiness which floweth from the spirit is very rare, and there is nothing in this world to nourish or refresh it with.

Will ye read this over in another Scripture-parable: why take it thus, from the old *Jerusalem* which was the type.

Look upon all the *Nations* round about, they were able to hurt better for themselves then *Jerusalem*. *Jerusalem* was most glorious when the Lord did shine upon her; but most barren, desolate, despicable, and helpless when the hand of the Lord went out against her. *Jerusalem* could not raise her own fabrick, nor preserve it when it was reared, nor rear it up again when it was thrown down. The rest of the *nations*, they could raise up the edifice of their own Religion, set fences about it to preserve it, lift it up again when it was fallen down: yea if the Lord himself throw down one building, they could raise up another, and that a better and stronger, one which should not be so easily shaken. *Edom* saith, *we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places*. No nation was so miserable; either in their outward estate or in their Religion, as the typical *Israel* of God when they were shaken by him.

Their

Their whole life and being as it came from him, so it depended wholly upon him.

Now what is the meaning of these things? Why surely this. They point out the great work which God hath been still a doing in the World: They hold out the difference between the beginning, estate, life, and course of the *World* and of *Israel*. The spirit of man can naturally fall into Religion, but *Israel* cannot do so: his nature teacheth him to look up unto the Lord, and to mourne after his light. The spirit of man can defend his Religion, but *Israel* cannot do so; but the Lord, which setteth up his Religion, must also let a defence about it, or it is exposed to danger, misery and ruin. The spirit of man can rear up building after building (If the Lord batter his spirit and break him down one way, he naturally breaketh forth another way; yea and healeth, after his fashion, that which was the cause of the former breach, so that now he is become more settled, and safe then before:.) But *Israel* cannot do so. If God throw down his fabrick, there lye the ruines thereof, and he mourning in the midst of them, until the Lord breathe life again into them, or raise up somewhat else for his spirit to enter into and inhabit in the Lord. Indeed Apostate *Israel*, which is returned into the spirit and principle of this World, which is fallen from God out of that dispensation, wherein he was placed, into his own worldly spirit and nature, he cannot but do, in this case, as the World doth. And thus ye find *Ephraim* and the inhabitant of *Samaria*, as well as *Edom*, from the same spirit taking up the same practise; as it is recorded, Isa. 9. 10. *The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewen stones: the Sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into Cedars.* But the true *Israel* (*Israel* the seed of God) cannot do thus. For though he may
dye)

dye (nay indeed must dye) and in his death, his natural spirit may be shifting for its ease; yet he doth it very lamely, and under all the reliefs he can find (which while his natural spirit and principle seeks, his inmost spirit and nature loaths) he cannot but remain desolate. For the seed can live any wherewith its own life, even in the lowest of Gods dispensations either of light or darkness, but no where without it. So that till the time of the return of life, the *bones* of *Israel* (and all the *stones* of his building) must needs remain withered and dry. *Sion* must lye in the dust and rubbish of her own ruins, there is no building of her up any more, *until the Lord arise and have mercy upon her.*

Hereupon the wisdom of the flesh hugely provoketh this wisdom. The reason and understanding of man laughs the wisdom of the spirit out of countenance, as is expressed in the foregoing Chapter, ver. 6. *And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb.* Mans reason being able to bring forth such brave things every where, cannot but disdain and deride that which appeareth more in great words, but less in reality then it self. What cannot man do? He can bring forth a lively seed in any way of Religion, he hath food and satisfaction there for them, &c. but as for this which taketh upon it to be the great spring of life what can it do? Where is that same wisdom of the spirit distinct from reason (yea which is the confounder and supplanter of reason) which some so ignorantly boast of? What can it bring forth? In stead of excelling the reason or wisdom of man, it doth but bewilder them that pretend to it, making them fools in their minds, and miserable in their present condition. Therefore saith the wisdom of the flesh, See what it is to be wise: See what it is to despise the wisdom, reason, and ordinary course of man. You

stamp

must have a Religion from above. Nothing will serve your turn but high kind of life, all spiritual, all of a divine stamp: See what comes of it? What do ye bring forth? Wher's your off-spring? Wher's your fruit unto holiness? What do all these strange notions come to? Had yee not better have kept in your old way? in your former path of light, of holiness, and obedience?

Well, The Lord hath shut up her womb, and shee cannot bear or bring forth children. This barren one whom flesh despiseth (whom the wisdom of man cannot but despise) is the Wife of the Lord, yea the beloved Wife; and shall one day be a fruitful Wife, though at present the Lord hath shut up her womb. Yea she and her seed shall live in the presence of the Lord, when the wisdom of the flesh shall grow barren, and all the seed which she hath already brought forth be turned out of doores. And then shall she sing this song in her own, yea in the sight of all flesh; (I mean the spirit, the life, the substance of it) which *Hannah* here expresseth in a parable. But to come a little neerer to the words.

This song looketh three waies. It hath reference to the present particular estate of *Hannah*. It had reference also to the then present estate of the *Jewes*, who were brought low by their uncircumcised enemies; over whom by the power of the Lord they should prevail and be uppermost, though they were now under them. But it most principally relates to the *spiritual Israel*, to the womb from whence they are to issue, to their birth and flourishing. The barren which hath lain desolate and afflicted, shall in that day rejoyce, when the Lord shall visit her and open her womb, bringing forth her seed into the light.

The tender mother, the true Church, shall bring forth

forth the true child out of her womb, which *shall rule all nations with a rod of iron.* The wisdom of man, in any way of Religion whatsoever, shall not bring forth *the Heir.* It is *Hannah* which shall bring forth *the Samuel of God, the Prophet of God, the Priest of God, the reformer and Judge in Israel.* And then shall joy spring up in the barren, for more shall be her children than the married Wives, saith the Lord. Thus much by way of Preface; now I proceed to the Song it self.

THE SONG OF JERUSALEM,

Offered up to God in a Prayer, or
confession of praise, due to the
faithfulness and holiness of
his Name and Na-
ture.

VER. I. *And Hannah Prayed, and said, My heart rejoy-
ceth in the Lord: mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my
mouth is enlarged over mine enemies: because I rejoyce
in thy salvation.*

WHEN she which travaileth hath brought
forth, then shall her poor tired soul be re-
freshed, and her fainting spirit (springing
forth with joy) shall be able to sing a Song
of Praise to the Lord. Then her *horn*, which
now lies in the dust, shall be exalted: and her *mouth*,
which is now shut, shall be opened wide; wider then
her enemies mouth then shall be, yea wider then her
enemies mouth now is.

Mine heart rejoyceth in the Lord.

Here are three things expressed. *Joy*: The inward
spring and Nature of this joy, it is from the heart, it is
hearty, *my heart rejoyceth*: And the object which it is
conversant about, what it is that heart rejoyceth in, or

in what respect the heart rejoyceth, it is *in the Lord*.

Joy, hearty joy (for other joy deserveth not the name) is the exultation of the spirit, the opening enlarging and dilating of the spirit. Grief is the contracting of the spirit, the shutting of it up: joy is the delightfull flowing forth of it. The manner of the springing forth of this joy is expressed, Isa. 69. v. 3. *Then shalt thou see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged.* It is spoken to her upon this very occasion, upon her unexpected bringing forth, upon her sudden sight of a seed that she wonders how she came by, as is further related Chap. 49. 21. *Then shalt thou say in thine heart, who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro?*

As the grief of this mother was very hearty, for the loss and want of her children, in her desolate and captived estate: (It wounded her at her very heart; it so shut up and oppressed her spirit, that she could not come forth any way, but sought only for an hole to grieve and break her heart in.) So when she is redeemed, when she is embraced, when she hath her seed again, when shee bringeth forth that life with which she travaileth, the second time; all her grief will then be gone, and her joy greater then ever, the ground of it being fuller and stronger. The recovery and bringing forth again of that which was lost, will be much more glorious and pleasant then the first conception, then the first birth, then the first bringing forth of it.

And she shall rejoyce *in the Lord*. Not so much in her own present estate, in her own present redemption, in her own present life, in the return and enjoyment of her seed; as in the Lord her God. The life of the Saints shall be exceeding sweet, and shall administer much joy, *after its return from captivity abroad. It shall be a cause of the persons and last of the Lord, with they shall meet with*

in it. They shall not boast of their righteousness, or of their strength (though both shall exceed) but of the Lord, saying, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* As the Lord shall only be taken up with, and only delight in this mother and her seed: So this mother and her seed shall only be taken up with and delight in the Lord! Tis the life of God, the nature of God, the pleasure of God, the presence of God breaking forth and appearing in her self and in her seed, that shall fill her heart with joy.

— *Isa. 45: 24*

Mine horn is exalted in the Lord.

The *horn* is that power, that instrument of strength which is given to the creature to defend it self which, and to offend that which is its enemy. The *horn* of the Church is its wisdom, its righteousness, the power and virtue of its life. The wisdom of flesh, the righteousness of flesh, the power and virtue of flesh, that's the *horn* of the other wife. The wisdom, righteousness, and power of Spirit, that's the *horn* of this wife.

The *horn* of the Church is alwaies very low, and the *horn* of flesh is exalted. Flesh hath wisdom, flesh hath righteousness, flesh hath strength to conceive, flesh hath strength to bring forth; flesh can contrive, and flesh can carry on its designs: The life and virtue of flesh is magnified; it thrives every waere. But the poor weak Church is laid low, her life is nothing, her life can do nothing; her *horn* (her strength) is weakness. Thus it pleaseth the Lord to lay the greatest glory in the lowest dust: But the Lord hath a time to *pity the dust of Sion*, to rake this life out of the ashes, and make the glory of it shine and appear: And then her *horn* shal be exalted. Then all the wisdom, righteousness, strength and excellency of flesh shall vanish and dy with all its seed and off-spring, and there shall no seed flourish but hers: No wisdom, no righteousness, no strength, no excellen-

cy shall be worth the naming, but what the Lord hath sown and bringeth forth in her. Then flesh, who hath hitherto been all and could do all, shall be nothing, shall be able to do nothing: And then she which hath lain under the hatches, hath been weak and low, could do nothing, could be nothing, &c. even she shall be all, she shall do all: her *horn* shall be exalted.

But it shall be *in the Lord*. This mother, this child, this life, this excellency shall never spring up as flesh did, shall never be rooted in is self, shall never hold forth any thing of it self: but all that it is, it shall be in the Lord; all that it holds forth, shall be of the Lord. Though the Lord giveth it a precious life and name, yet it shall bury all its own life and name continually in the Lord, and suffer nothing to be in it or issue from it, which doth not hold forth the Lord alone. The Father will bestow all upon the son: but the son will know or enjoy nothing but the Father. If any thing in him be to be exalted, first it must return unto the Lord and have its place there, and then very willingly he will have it exalted, as much as the Lord pleaseth.

My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies.

This wife, the Church, the mother of that eternal life which God bringeth forth, hath great enemies, desperate enemies that hunt after the life of her and her seed. And their prevailings are such (the Church is many times brought so low, and they are so lifted up with their successes against her) that they think and speak very contemptuously of her. *God hath forsaken her*, say they, *persecute and take her: Down with her, down with her to the ground.* And how do they lang and scorn at her, when she is laid low? The mouth of the enemy is almost continually enlarged over the Church. Their own beauty, their own life (with the abundant flourishing of their seed) compared with the
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blackness, death, and desolation of this mother and her seed (for very little doth she bring forth, and what she doth is very contemptible) opens the thoughts of her heart, and the words of her mouth very largely against her. In so much as the reason and wisdom of man cannot but admire and prize what it self can attain, what it self can bring forth, for above the low weak estate of the wisdom and life of the Spirit at present.

But now, when God visits this life, when this life conceives from his overshadowing, and brings forth her seed out of her womb; then *her mouth shall be enlarged over her enemies*. Then she shall be able to boast more in the name and Spirit of the Lord, then the flesh can now, in the name and Spirit of the flesh. The truth is, The wisdom of man may well be boasted of, while the wisdom of God is hid: and they that can make use of this wisdom in the day thereof, must needs far excel them, every way, in whom this wisdom is broken, and as yet nothing raised which is better: But when the wisdom and life of God is stirred up in them, and brings forth the truth, the face of man shall grow pale, his Spirit faint, his mouth dumb, and the mouth of this despised woman shall be enlarged over him.

Because I rejoyce in thy salvation.

The ground of all this joy and exultation, the ground of the Church, its elevated estate, and of her joy in it, is from the *salvation* of the Lord. The former time was the time of death, the time of destruction, the time of captivity and desolation; No marvel the Church was low then, no marvel the eye of man could not see her beauty, and so did not acknowledg, but preferred himself and his own life far above her. But now is the time of salvation, now is the time wherein she is redeemed from all her deaths and captivities: and that not by any power of flesh, not by any power of her own; but it is

done by a lasting hand, the Lord hath done it; and it is of a lasting nature, it is the *salvation of the Lord*, and so the joy also shall be lasting. It is not such an exaltation as mans commonly is, which must necessarily down again when somewhat else is discovered (which now he is not a ware of) which will dash all his wisdom and reason, with all the fruits thereof, out of countenance; but is an exaltation that will last, that will remain for ever. The Church its *horn* shall never down again, the Church its *mouth*, that is opened and *enlarged over her enemies*, shall never be shut or straitned again, because she rejoyceth in the *salvation of the Lord*. Such is the ground-work of this estate, and of this joy in it, as can never vary. The Lord can bring forth perfect salvation, salvation which destruction cannot swallow. This salvation God reserveth for his Church, and when he hath wrought it, it shall appear to be such a salvation. The Church shall feel and know it to be so. She is apt, in dispensations, to take every salvation to be so, and she may easily be deceived in the duskish light of a dispensation: but in the cleer and perfect light of the day she shall not, but shall see the truth.

VER. 2. *There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God.*

Holiness is that nature of God (or that property in the nature of God) from which his seed springs, and whereby he himself most naturally inclineth toward his seed. From hence all his promises and engagements to his seed are called his holiness. Unless God were true and faithful to his seed, in their new creation, in their preservation, and in their manuduction to life, he could not be holy. His holiness cheisly engageth him unto (and is cheisly discovered in) his fidelity to his spouse (the beloved spouse of his soul) and her off-spring.

It is not his correspondency to any literal law, but his answering the royal law of his life and nature toward his seed, whereby he is holy. The seed are holy as they answer the law of their Spirit toward their God: and God is holy as he answers the law of his Spirit toward his seed.

Now, *there is none holy as the Lord.* There is none so exact and adequate to the law of their nature, as God is to his. The *Angels* fell from the law of their nature, and *Adam* fell from the law of his nature, and *man* continually falleth from the law of every dispensation whereunto he is both formed and fitted; yea and *the seed* would fall too, did they not continually depend, upon and suck life from God, by whom the holiness of their nature is preserved, and who alone is radically holy in himself. Christ himself could never have upheld his life, had he not been taught by God the skill to live in the root, and had not the root freely lived in him: nor can he seed live any other way, but by their living in it through Christ, and by its living in them through Christ. So that there is none *holy* as he, None hath such a pure entire faithful nature as he; None sticks so close to his wife, as he doth to his spouse in her greatest desolation and barrenness. And though this may not hold good, to the eye of her sense, by the light of any dispensation (Nay it did not hold good to the eye of the sense of Christ, but he speaking truly, according to that, must deny this truth: and so he did, for he complained unto God of his forsaking him, and of his not hearing him) yet it will be very clear in the light of the Lord, where it will manifestly appear how close and firm he hath kept himself, even in all his waies throughout all his dispensations, both to the whole love of his heart, and to all the promises and expressions which he gave out to her by reason thereof. And then Christ and all his seed

shall say (what ever sense and experience buz into their ears now at present) that the Lord was perfectly holy, even in all the strains of all his dispensations toward them all along. *There is none holy as the Lord*; There never was such holiness heard of, as the Lord had in his Spirit, all along, to steer him by in his carriages toward his spouse and her seed.

For there is none beside thee.

Indeed there cannot well be any holy like thee, for there is none else. There is nothing but the holiness of the Lord to be seen in the light and presence of the Lord. It is in the distracting light of this world that such great diversity of things appears; in the light of the Lord there's no other variety but what is comprized and comprehended in unity. *The Lord is one, and his name one*, every where there.

The Lord knoweth nothing but himself. The Lord is so swallowed up with himself, that he cannot see or acknowledg any thing else, no more then the Sun shining in its strength can permit any of the shadowes to remain which it self made. Should the Lord own any thing but himself, he should not be true to his own substance, to his own fulness. And that eye which once seeth the Lord, is presently so surrounded with him, that it also can see nothing more, but immediately crieth out, *There is none beside thee.* The Lord is so full, so perfect, that he leaveth no room for any thing but himself. Before he brought forth this creation he was alone, and he hath not lost by bringing of it forth, but he is still as he was, There is nothing besides himself. He is still *the only substantial being*, which swalloweth up all other Beings, so that they are not, where he is. All other Beings (if God brought forth ten thousand Worlds of them) would be but as ciphers before him, and not be able to maintain the name of BEING

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in his presence. And yet he that shall run away with this notion, thinking to set it up as a peece of excellent knowledg, and hereby deny any thing else its due, (*viz.* that kind of state and being which the Lord hath given it) he knoweth not the Lord. Did he know the Lord, he would acknowledg every things state and being in the Lord, and not deny it. Yea (of the two) it is better distinctly to acknowledg these Beings here, by this cloudy light, where in God hath brought them forth, then confusedly to drown them in such a notion as this, that *there is nothing but the Lord*. This is not light for man to be playing with, but is to spring up in the seed, although through the seed it may cast some rayes upon man. I shall close up this with this ensuing riddle or mistery, *That which was not, is not, and that which was, only is, and alone shall be*; which though it be a riddle to the Spirit of man, yet it is a very plain and evident truth before the Lord.

Neither is there any rock like our God.

God is *our God*; he is *the God of his seed, the God of Jacob, the God of Israel*; The God of the *Jewes* in the first place, though indeed he is the God of the *Gentiles* also, but as yet he doth not so appear and break forth unto them. When the *Jewes* and the *Gentiles* lay in one common lump, he was the God of neither, though the God of both: And in their separation and division, he is first the God of the *Jewes*; his life is theirs, his salvation is theirs, he is theirs in a way of distinction from the *Gentiles*; So that as the *Gentiles* are not his people, so neither is he their God. The right, the propriety, the peculiarity in God belongs to the *Jewes*, belongs to the *seed*.

And he is their *rock*. The nature of God is a rock, and so he manifesteth himself in every dispensation. There is an immovable strength and firmness in God;

which stayeth and repholdeth every thing that leans up-
 on him. Lay never so great a weight upon a rock,
 it will bear it up all. God beareth up the Spirits of his
 people under all their sins, afflictions, miseries, &c.
 he bears up the whole weight of their life, he bears up
 the whole weight of their Spirits, even when they are
 loaded with the greatest weights.

There is no such rock besides him, *neither is there any
 rock like our God.* There is nothing so firm, so stable,
 so supportive as God is to his Church, to his spouse, to
 his seed, to that life which issueth from the nature of his
 Spirit. There is no *life* like theirs, no *fight* or know-
 ledg of God like theirs, no *faith* like unto theirs (which
 can lean and live upon God in the midst of all the despair-
 ings of their own flesh) no *love*, like theirs (which
 most naturally, rowleth it self upon, and uniteth it self
 with, the nature and Spirit of the Lord where ever it is:)
 Nor is there any such *rock* to any thing else as *God* is to
 them, who bears up all their life and hopes in the midst
 of all the pressuress, deaths, and miseries wherewith
 they are continually loaded, in their dark passage to-
 ward the presence and bosome of their Father.

VER. 3. *Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not ar-
 rogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of
 knowledg, and by him actions are weighed.*

THe World thriveth here in the World; The Spi-
 rit of man being planted, in this earth, groweth
 and flourisheth, bringing forth the fruit of nature
 (after his manner) unto God who planted him. He
 can receive the knowledg of God, he can serve and en-
 joy God, he can bring forth fruit unto God, and taste
 the sweetness of that fruit which drops down from God
 upon him. Now finding himself thus to live and flou-
 rish,

rish, and the Church poor and low; he scorns her, he tramples upon her, he insults over her, he speaketh hard concerning and against her; yea in his fury he is ready to drive her and her seed out of the World, of whom the World was never worthy. He thinks he can do God no better service, then to crush her who hath pretended such a nearness to him (and indeed did once hold forth some of his life and power) but is now become so destitute and so disowned by him. *God hath forsaken him, persecute and take him*, saith the Spirit of man concerning Christ, his spouse and all the seed, in the day of their calamity.

When Hagar saw she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. When the seed of God, or rather the wife of God (the wisdom of his Spirit clouded in weak dark flesh) tells the World that there is no conceiving of the life and knowledg of God, but in the true womb, (Indeed there is no conceiving of the truth any where else) that there is no knowing, worshipping, or serving of God but in his light: This startles them at first (their very hearts and consciences telling them that they are not acquainted with any such thing:) But when they recover themselves and take in seed, and find that they do bring forth, and that those who spake so much of the truth are themselves abortive, they then begin not only to despise them in their Spirits, but also to speak proudly and arrogantly concerning them, laughing at their spiritual light and wisdom which they thus talked of. *They talk exceeding proudly; They exercise the greatest scorn, the greatest contempt, the greatest loathing that can be.* There is no such spectacle of scorn and derision to the World, as the mother of Christ before she brings him forth, and as her son in his death. *All that pass by, clap hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, Is this the City that men call the perfection of beauty*

*Lam. 2:
35: 16:*

beauty, the joy of the whole earth: All thine enemies have opened their mouth: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for, we have found, we have seen. Thus they deal with the mother, and her child fares no better: All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him seeing he delighted in him. They laugh the mother out of countenance with or about her seed, and they laugh the seed out of countenance with or about their life, watching their advantage against both, viz. the time of their distress.

Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth.

The flesh is exceeding proud and arrogant, in the day of her exaltation, over the poor weak seed of God. O how loftily she speaks! O how her arrogancy bubbles out of her mouth! O how her lips triumph over the wisdom of God in the day of its weakness! Because she seeth it barren in them who were the greatest admirers of it and pretenders to it, and that it cannot bring forth (and seeing also her down seed so numerous:) therefore she cannot hold her tongue for her heart, but must needs be scoffing at them, scorning, and insulting over them. *Is this Jerusalem that must become the praise of the earth? is this the only seed? is this the heir? are these the only true worshippers here, and the only inheritors of glory hereafter? is this their great rich life? is this their knowledge? is this their joy, their rest, their peace?* Indeed as for that life, that rest, that joy, &c. which the mother her seed talk so much of, there is no such thing (for the most part) to be found: They themselves meet with no such thing. They have only such a taste of it as convinceth them that they are without it: They see, they feel, they know thereby that they are far from rest, far from life, far from

Isaiah 22:
7: 11:

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from joy, &c. But the fleshly Spirit hath rest in its waies of Religion, hath joy in its light, hath life in its motions : It brings forth fruit, and it reapes and enjoys fruit; whereas the poor Church travaileth, and hath strong pangs to no purpose, not only to the sence of man, but even to her own sence : for so she expresseth it by way of complaint unto God, Isa. 26. 18. *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the World fallen.* Notwithstanding all our travels and pangs, we have not brought forth any thing, but the true life and wisdom lies under as great captivity as ever, and earthly-spirited-man stands as stiff and as high as ever.

Thus the game went formerly, thus the strain of things hath gone hitherto : but now the tide is turned; now the Church is visited by her God, and her mouth is opened and enlarged over her enemies. Now she can boast and triumph over them, who trampled upon her, in the Lord her God. And thus she sweetly checks their pride and arrogance (not in the sowness and lostiness of the flesh, but in the humility and meekness of the Spirit, saying) *Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth.* Be not so forward hereafter to contemn and scorn the poor and weak one of the Lord, in her low estate. Ye see there may be a turn of things : The Lord may visit her who now seems forsaken and may forsake her who now seems the onely one.

For the Lord is a God of knowledg.

God knows what he does, in shutting up the womb that is, to conceive and bring forth his own seed, his own life. The Lord understands himself in all these fruitless pangs (for so they are to your sence, and in a great part to the eye of her own sence too) which befall his

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Church. The Lord understands himself what he does in letting your bastardly life flourish, and in keeping down the true life in his own Church and seed. The Lord knows when, and which way to bring down the one, and to exalt the other. Therefore, O foolish vain man, do not boast thy self against the Church and seed of the Lord, because of their misery, because of that vail of darkness and shame wherewith they are for the most part covered; nor do not bless thy self in thine own present life and beauty: for *God is a God of knowledge*. God understands well how to redeem their life from the grave (from that death and destruction wherewith it is overwhelmed) and he knows likewise how to overtake thy life with death and destruction, and to bring it into the grave. Indeed if God had no other wisdom then man sees in him, man would alwaies flourish, and the Church ever pine and decay, and be insulted over by man: but because *the Lord is a God of knowledge*, it will not alwaies be so.

And by him actions are weighed.

The Lord, who hath the judgment and dispose of all things, he righteously scanneth and weigheth all things. He scanneth all the motions that proceed from himself, or from any else. God hath just and righteous ballances wherein he weigheth every thing, all actions, all motions of every thing, of every kind, in every kind. The Lord doth not things slightly and ignorantly, but weighs all his actions concerning all things in the scale of his own understanding, holiness and righteousness. The Lord hath ballances, universal ballances, ballances for every thing, ballances for every action: and he maketh use of them; he weigheth every thing, he weigheth every action in them. He doth every thing, he ordereth every thing by weight and measure. This is the reason why it shall go well with the Church and her seed, and why it shall

shall not go well with the Spirit of man and his seed, because *the Lord is a God of knowledge*, he knows the natures and Spirits, and he weighs the actions of them both.

Actions are weighed. All the actions of himself are weighed, All the actions of his spouse and her seed are weighed, All the actions of man are weighed. His righteousness and unrighteousness is weighed: His worship, his holiness, the frame of his Spirit, (with all the motions of it in every kind) are weighed, and found not to be what he took them for. All his insolencies, contempts, and persecutions of the spouse of God and her seed are also weighed: And whereas man found them just and righteous in his ballance, (it hath ever been just in the ballance of mans reason for him to persecute the Church and her seed) yet they are found otherwise in Gods: where that which man, in his wisdom and zeal condemneth, the Lord justifieth; and what man doth highly esteem of, as excellently, holy, and righteous and very acceptable to God, the Lord abhors and condemns. There will be a strange catastrophe of things when God brings forth his knowledge, and righteous judgment, when he comes with his ballances and weighs things.

VER. 4. *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled, are girt with strength.*

There are men that are *mighty* in the wisdom and power of the flesh. This mother is lusty, and she brings forth lusty brats; which when they come to be men, grow great and strong in the vertue of that fleshly principle, which they derived from their mother.

Bows are the instruments of war of these mighty men. As Christ hath his bowes, and his arrows, where-

with he wounds the heart of the flesh. So the flesh and her seed have their bows and their arrows, wherewith they wound the heel of the woman and her seed.

Now these bows which are the engins of their strength (that wherein their strength lieth, and whereby it goeth forth) they are strong, mighty, and do very great execution, so far as they are able to reach: and they seem to their owners to reach the very heart of the seed, but indeed they do but a little bruise their heel. But there is a time for the seed to rise up in their wisdom, and in their strength; and then these mighty men fall and their bows are broken. The strength and wisdom of all that wherein they trusted fails, it is weakness, it is not able to stand before that which comes out against it. The wisdom of man is wisdom, the strength of man is strength, the life of man is life; while true wisdom, true strength, true life appears not: but when the truth comes, the shadow vanisheth, and is emptiness, vanity, nothing; hath no life, no strength in it. That life, that motion which it had, was not from it self, but from the body: but now that is gone too. All mans knowledge of God, all mans faith, all mans obedience, all mans righteousness which he hath in observation of any of the waies of God, either under the Law or under the Gospel, alas, where are they! what are they, or what is he in them, when God cometh to search and scan both him and them? He is very glorious now, he is very mighty now, he can wound even to death the low appearance of God in his seed, he can dash in peeces the several weak breakings forth of the life of God in any kind whatsoever. Let the life of God break forth in any way of worship, and man can dash against it and overturn it there: Let the Church flye into the wilderness, he can follow and fall upon her there also: For he is a mighty man, and hath a strong bow; ah, but what will he

he do when his bow broken! What will proud lofty man do, when the Lord scattereth him in the imaginations of his heart! (Luk. 1. 51.) Alas what will become of all the reasonings of man (for himself, for his own waies, for his own life and righteousness, for his faith and knowledg) against the truth which the Church and her seed give testimony to, when life shall appear in the one, and death seize upon the other. What arrow will man be able to shoot, what bow will hold against the power of the truth of life in the seed, when it springeth up. This very manifestation of God in them will dash man in peeces (with all his life, with all his excellency, with all his Religion) like a potters vessel. *The bows of the mighty men are broken.*

And they that stumbled, are girt with strength.

This is the description of the seed, they are stumblers. They are not able to walk, they are not able to fight, they are not able to stand upon their feet, and behave themselves like men, but are still stumbling. Hold forth any of the waies of God, man can receive them: Let light break forth in any kind, man can improve it and make use of it; but these poor souls nothing but stumble at every path of God, at every beam of light. And the reason is, because it cometh not yet forth for them, but for man, to exercise and try him; and so commeth forth in such a way, as man can receive it and walk in it, but they cannot. But there is a time, when it shall so break forth that man shall not be able to come neer it, but it shall be easy and natural to them. The wisest of men shall not find it, and the foolishhest of them shall not miss it, as is testified Isa. 35. 8. *And a high way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the waifaring men, though fools, shall not erre, neither in passing over to it, nor in walking in it;*

They that stumble. Stumbling ariseth from these four causes: From want of light, from want of faith or confidence, from want of a plain way, and from want of strength (from the weakness and faintness of the person) Now all these causes are very forcible upon them.

1. *They want light.* It is the time of their darkness. Hereafter the Lord will say to them, *Arise, shine, thy light is come*: but as yet their light is not come. Man, he hath light in the things of God; It is his day, therefore he can walk and not stumble: but the light of the seed is hid, the Lord *hideth his face* (wherein is all their light and life) *from the house of Jacob.*

2. *They want faith or confidence.* What maketh the Spirit heavy, weighty, and so apt to sink or stumble? *O thou of little Faith*, said Christ, to Peter when he doubted and was sinking. And indeed how can he be confident, who is in the dark? He from whom God is hid, how can he confidently lay hold on him? Faith springs from light. Therefore man may be confident in his way of worship, in his Religion, &c. because it is his day, he hath his light: but the seed they are (and cannot but be) of a fearful heart because of their darkness, *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come, &c.* Isa. 35. 4.

3. *They want a plain way.* The way or path of holiness, wherein the seed are to walk with God into his own life, is very intricate and difficult: it is not yet cast up, it is not yet prepared for their feet to tread in. Indeed the Lord will say, *Cast ye up, cast ye up; prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people*: but the word is not yet spoken, the thing is not yet done. But mans way is plain: Every way that man falls into in his Religion, in his worship, it is after a sort plain to his understanding, it is already prepared for him:

him : but the true substantial way of life is hid from the seed.

4. *They want strength.* They are in a feeble fainting estate: their soul is pained, and with hunger and grief faints and fails. (They are *poor and needy, seeking water where there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst. I will not contend for ever, neither will I be alwaies wroth: for the Spirit would fail before me, and the souls I have made.* Sure they must needs be very weak, when they are thus, like the snuff of a candle even going out. Now a very weak man is hardly able to walk on the plainest ground without stumbling, nay he can scarce stand without tottering. The spirit of man is strong and mighty (being abundantly fed from that spirit and principle which yet lives in him:) but the Spirit of life, the true child, the true nature, as it is in a state of darkness and weakness, so it is wondrous weak. Life runs very low in it : It wants food, it wants warmth, it wants vigor, it wants every thing that might strengthen it. It is a poor, naked, starveling, destitute shrimp, fain it would move toward God, fain it would vvalk in the waies of God, fain it would grapple vvith, and overcome every thing that stands in the vvay of its ovvn life and of the vvill of its God, but alas it can nothing but stumble.

Are girt with strength.

When the strong one is made weak, the weak one shall be made strong: And when the weak one is made strong, the strong one shall be made vweak. When *the bows of the mighty men are broken*, then *the stumblers shall come forth vvith their mighty bowvs, and vvith their mighty strength.* When those that vvere cleer and mighty in the knowvledg and life of God, shall be broken in pieces: then those that nothing but stumbled at all the things and vvaies of God, shall come forth in the beauty

beauty cleerness and glory of life.

Are girt with strength. The expression is very emphatical. They shall not have strong bows, but strength shall be their bow: They shall not have a strong weapon, but strength it self shall be their weapon: The Lord will not set a strong wall or bulwark about them, but salvation it self shall be their wall and their bulwark; (*we have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks: yea upon all her glory shall be a defence.*) They shall be filled with the Lord, they shall be surrounded with the Lord, they shall be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The Spirit, the Life, the Power, the Excellency of the Lord shall be their bow and their arrow, their ammunition both of offence and defence, whereby they shall be perfectly safe themselves, and shall also be able to assault and destroy their enemy at pleasure. They shall strip and slay the spirit of man with ease, and in such a way as may administer most sport to the Spirit of the Lord and to their own spirits. As man now by his wisdom playes with them, comprehends their weakness and darknes in his life & strength: so they shall (more truly, fully, and perfectly) play with man, and triumph (in the strength and life of their salvation) over the weakness, death and destruction of the destroyer. And now, the knowledge of God, faith in God, ability to walk in all the waies of life and holiness shall be as easy to them, as it was difficult before. What can be hard or buthensome to him who is girt with strength? And also it shall be then impossible for man to know or walk in any of the waies of God: His spirit is broken, his vessel is dashed in peeces, there is nothing left for him to receive the deep light and life of the Lord into. This Spirit which he despised is the vessel which the Lord only fitted for it, and no vessel else hath any capacity for the containing of it.

VER. 5. *They that were full, have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry, ceased: so that the barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children, is waxed feeble.*

They that were full of knowledg, full of righteousness, full of wisdom, full of strength, &c. they have not now sufficient to maintain life in them. When the time comes that flesh must dye, all her food shall fail. The spirit of man, which was hitherto able to live so abundantly, by the knowledg of God and obedience to him under the Law, or by the knowledg of Christ, and by faith in the Gospel, shall be so destitute (in this great turn of things) that he shall not know what to do for bread. O how will life shift for itself! and o to what shifts shall (especially where it is eminent) the life of the spirit of man be put to!

And those that were hungry after these things, shall be sufficed. The poor life of the woman and her seed, which hath alwaies hungered after God, and never had a full meals meat, is now visited with plenty; is now so satisfied with the fulness of God, that its hunger ceaseth. Those that have alwaies been hungry hitherto, shall cease from being hungry any more: and those who have hitherto (in some degree or other) been full, shall be filled no more. Then their life shall be put to it, and the life which hath been hitherto put to it shall find ease and rest. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall say thee, And call his servants by another name: That he

who bleſſeth himſelf in the earth, may bleſſ himſelf in the God of truth; and he that ſweareth in the earth, may ſwear by the God of truth; when the former troubles ſhall be forgotten, and when they ſhall be hid from mine eyes. For behold I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former ſhall not be remembred, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoyce for ever in that which I create: for behold, I create Jeruſalem a rejoycing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoyce in Jeruſalem, and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping ſhall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. Iſa. 65. ver. 13. to 29.

They that were full, have hired out themſelves for bread.

Here is a great turn, a great change in the whole ſtate of life throughout this World. As yet nothing hath thriven but the Spirit of man, and the true Spirit of life in the Church and her ſeed, hath been both diſovvned by God, and persecuted by man, and Satan. Man both ſeeks and finds, the vvomb of the fleſh asketh and hath, her deſires are anſvveared; ſhe hath a kind of ſatisfaction, ſhe hath a kind of ſence and enjoyment of God, is ovvned by him and hath ſeed from him; and is able to conceive, bring forth, and maintain her ſeed. But the poor Church and her ſtarveling ſeed hunger and thirſt even to extremity, but can no vvhere meet vvith that vvich they hunger and thirſt after. But novv the Sceane is at length turned; the Church is ovvned and the World rejected. That day of the Lord appears, vvherein the Spirit, vvifdom, and life of man vaniſheth; vvherein the ſhadovves fly avvay, and nothing vvill paſs for currant or prove ſatisfactory but truth. Novv only true life can manifeſt it ſelf to be life, and novv only true food can nourish. Novv a great emptineſs is brought upon the full, and great fulneſs beſtovved upon the empty. Novv the Spirit of man begins to feel vvhat it is to vvant a root of life at bottome, vvhat it is to vvant truth

truth to feed him, and how miserable that life must needs become, which cannot now any longer be maintained with husks, and yet cannot eat the true bread.

O how wonderful will this penury and this plenty be! The full are brought so low, that they want bread. They that abounded with all manner of dainties and varieties in the life and enjoyments of their Spirits, are so stripped now that they want necessities. They want not only that light, that life, that knowledg, &c. which may adorn the estate of man; but that which is necessary for its sustentation. Nor shall they only be thus (as they now already are) in the truth and reality of their estate; but they shall also have the full sence of it. Man is now a vain empty thing; all he is, is nothing: His life is not life, his knowledg is not knowledg, his salvation is not salvation, his husks are not bread: but he doth not now know it, he doth not now feel it to be so, but he is rich and full, he needeth nothing: His hopes are large enough for the end, and his provision is sufficient for the way: He hath that knowledg of Christ here, in the way to Heaven, which will very well serve his turn till he come thither. Yea but then he shall feel what he is, then he shall feel what he wants; then he shall find his emptiness, and feel his hunger and thirst, which shall be so vehement and pressing upon him, that he would do any thing for the least releif, which is expressed in this phrase *have hired out themselves for bread*. It sheweth their great poverty, their great penury and want, and their very great extremity in it. *They that were full* (that did abound with variety and plenty) shall want bread: and they shall be so poor that they shall have nothing left; no kind of mony or mony's worth to buy it with; but they shall be fain to hire out themselves for it: and their extremity shall be so great, that they shall not stick at it; but do it, they shall hire out them-

selves for bread. They shall subject themselves to *the* life in those on whom they have trampled, not with desire or expectation to reign with them (for they will see that that cannot be) but if so be they may but have a little bread from them, I mean such food, such knowledge, such a kind of taste and enjoyment of God, as the nature and state of their life requires. They shall wish all their hearts become *bewers of wood and drawers of water*, if they may but have the reward which belongs there to, for their pains. The Spirit of man would fain grasp the hope of the seed, and live the life of the seed: It strives hard for it, and it seemeth to it self very fair for the attaining of it, and cannot but laugh to think that the seed should offer to step between it and home: But for all that it shall be disappointed. The seed shall enjoy this life, and it shall only live upon the crumbs which fall from the tables of the seed, which it shall greedily desire, thankfully embrace, and hire out it self for. It shall lay out all its life and strength in the service of the seed, and be thankful if it may reap this from them.

They that were full, have hired out themselves for bread.

Man cannot live without bread; The nature of the manhood pines and dies without the knowledge of God, which is the bread and life of man. The brutish Spirit may live without any distinct sense of God but the rational cannot. Now all mans bread shall faile; That which he hath laid out his mony for, and took as bread hitherto, shall now appear to be not so. It was a kind of bread then, in some measure fit to serve the present turn, but now it will not. It never was compleat truth, but now it is not so much as it was. The Lord hath drawn in all the life and Spirit which he breathed forth this way, and it cometh forth thus no more. From
henceforth

henceforth all the bread shall be set on the childrens table : There shall no light, no knowledg of God breath forth, but from them (but from that nature and Spirit which liveth in, and is one with them) and they alone shall dispence it. They shall give out to man, what the light in them demonstrates to be fit for him. But, for this, man must hire out himself, he must not live of himself (of his own principle any longer :) but he must come underneath, and be a servant to his Master, and in this his subjection he shall live and have bread : *but the rebellious shall dwell in a dry land.*

And they that were hungry, ceased.

This is the end of the hunger and thirst of the seed, it tends to perfect satisfaction. The fulness of man tends to perfect emptiness, and the emptiness of the seed tends to perfect fulness. They that were so thirsty after the water of life, that they could seem to themselves *Leviathan*-like, to drink up *Jordan* at a draught, and yet not quench their thirst, have water enough. (*There is a River, the streams whereof make glad the City of God.*) They that were so extremely hungry after the life of God, the light of God, the power of God, the presence of God, yea after the fulness of every thing in God, are now so filled, so satisfied, so abundantly supplied that their hunger ceaseth. Surely from hence forth, from this day forward all generations shall call this woman and her seed blessed ! Then shall every one see, that which is now so great a mystery, namely, That the hungry and thirsty after righteousness, such as hunger and thirst after the knowledge and life of God, are the only blessed, and not they that are now filled with it.

So that the barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children, is mixed feeble.

This is the fruit or effect of the Lords blessing of the one, and his blasting of the other. The one thrived

formerly in her day, and the other thriveth now in her day. Flesh had many children when she was fed and nourished by the Lord, and the wisdom of the Spirit was barren: but now the Church bringeth forth her seed in the day of her visitation, and the wisdom of the flesh grows barren. She that hath the life in her bringeth forth the seed of life, and that seed lives and brings forth fruit to God: but the flesh (which hath been the only bearer hitherto) groweth feeble and cannot bring forth, and that which is already brought forth by her she cannot maintain, it cannot live or thrive any longer. That fruit, which she and her seed brought forth before, is now out of date; and she hath no skill in this new kind of fruit. She hath not the principle of this life in her. This indeed is such a new light as she knowveth not vvhat to make of, and alas her old light is passed away! Novv is the blessed day of God, novv is the breaking forth of his Nature, Spirit, Life and glory, novv is the beginning of his reign, novv is the time of the flourishing of his dear vvife vvith her precious off-spring, vvwhich she bringeth forth in abundance, and vvwhich growv up abundantly by her side: and the flesh, vvwhich vvvas so fertile before, is novv grovvn vveak, so that she can bring forth no more, nor maintain her issue no longer, further then she is assisted by alms from the table of the seed.

VER. 6. *The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.*

THe Church now in her restoration, in her resurrection, can acknowledg the Lord in all those pangs and degrees of death, which were so bitter to her in the season of them, and administred to her by she knew not vvhat hand. It was true life in her which was slain, and

it was the Lord that slew it. All those miseries she met with, were the Lords engines of death. The Lord who prospered the Spirit of man in his waies and exercises of Religion, blasted her in hers. *The Lord killed;* The Lord prosecuted her with instruments of death and destruction, till he had brought her unto death. The Lord left not off from prosecuting her, till he had digged a grave for her, and fairly laid her in it. The Lord hunted all the seed of life back into the womb, and laid the very womb of life also in the grave. And now it is very pleasant to the Church and her seed, to eye the whole course and all the several passages of the head and hand of the Lord in this curious work of her destruction. As in death it is very bitter to contemplate the foregoing strains of life : so in life it is very sweet to look back upon the several bitter passages and occurrences of death.

The Lord killeth, and bringeth down to the grave.

There is no life so excellent but the Lord slayeth. The son himself, in the most excellent nature, manner of life that ever he was brought forth in, in this World, was brought forth to be slain. The seed, with all the life that springs up in it, dies. The Spirit of Christ, which was given to the primitive Christians, was grieved, afflicted, yea slain by the flesh which dwelt in them. Neither is it a natural death, but a violent death which they under go. Christ was slain, and that by the hand of the Lord : The Lord himself, who gave the life, slew it. Wicked men and devils are but the instruments of God, whereby he righteously slayeth the righteous life of his Holy One. It is not a mean grave which the Lord prepareth, nor is it a mean life which he swalloweth up and layeth in that grave. Neither is this injury or unkindness in God so to do, but great righteousness and love. This life was given to Christ and his seed to become a Sacrifice, and it is their great advantage

tage to have it slain. Christ and his seed are never in a better way (in a surer way) to the rich life and glory they desire, then when they are slain by the Spirit of the Lord, and descend with the Spirit of the Lord into the grave which he hath prepared for them. For this is the vway to life, This is the vway to the resurrection. Christ and his seed *ought to suffer these things, and so to enter into their glory.* Their life can never live in the Spirit, unless it first dy in the flesh: And therefore doth the Lord slay it in the flesh, and bury it in the grave for flesh; not that it might utterly perish there, but that it might rise again in purity and perfection, in such a way as it might be fit to enjoy it self and its God, and to be enjoyed of him.

The Lord maketh a live, and bringeth up.

The Lord doth not only kill and bring to the grave, but he quickens in the grave, and raiseth out of the grave. After this fleshly life, of Christ and his seed, hath been truly and throughly slain, and hath lain its sea on in the grave, God visits his holy child and quickens him with a new life, and raiseth him out of the grave to live to him in it, and to enjoy him by it. Now this life, this resurrection, is only by the Spirit and power of the Lord. All the World, with all the powers of darkness, could not administer to Christ this death: and they are as far from helping forward this life and resurrection. This the Lord alone can do, and thus the Lord will certainly do in his own time. Whoever tastes of this cup of death, shall live this life. Indeed mans death (in all the several kinds and degrees of it) doth not at all lead to this: the death of all mans vain knowledg, mans vain Religion, can never lead to this: it must be a true death of the truth, which leadeth to this life. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of all his Saints*, but the counterfeit deaths of mans Spirit are of no value. Man may

may dye to one strain of Religion, and rise and live in another: but in the death of the seed there is the death of the Spirit of life in that its fleshly way of ministration, and the death of the Spirit of man with it; which is so true and full (when the Lord hath once perfected it) that the life in them can return no more to any such kind of life, no nor so much as the natural, or humane Spirit in them, because that also was truly slain together with the life. Whereas now in other men there is no true life slain (for it cannot be, there being no true life in them) and the humane Spirit is slain in them only in this or that way, but doth easily and most naturally thirst for some other way to break forth in; and when it is administred, it finds a kind of ability and strength to live in it. Yet as this death was no death (no true death:) so this resurrection and life is no true resurrection and life before the Spirit of the Lord, *who killeth and maketh alive, who bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up.*

VER. 7. *The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.*

Wonderful strange and unexpected are the works of the Lord; both in the World and in his Church. He turneth the state of things up and down in either, as he pleaseth. This is the course of God in the World, to make poor and rich: to throw down the high and lofty, and to exalt that which is low. The trees of the World (especially the great Okes thereof) are a long time a growing: but when they come to their height, when they come to their maturity and perfection, they at last decline, if they be not thrown down violently. But God doth this more eminently in his Church: How poor were the people of the *Jewes*, when God first began to make them rich! They were the outcasts of all Nations, They were in their

blood, when he said unto them *Live*; They were so far from ornaments, that they were without raiment to cover their nakedness, as is at large expressed, Ezek. 16. But how rich did God make them! how did they abound with the knowledg of God, with the presence of God, with the power of God! &c. They were beautified and adorned beyond all Nations. God had not dealt so with other Nations; no not with any nation beside them. But after this they were made poorer then ever, and the poor desolate *Gentiles* (yea the poorest among the *Gentiles*) are made far richer then ever they were; *The poor receive the gospel*: And O what treasures, what abundant riches of life do they receive with the gospel! But behold, a greater poverty hath swallowed up this riches, a deeper grave hath been made for this life, then ever was made for the life of the *Jewes*! The desolation which God hath brought upon the *Spiritual Israel*, is greater then that which was brought upon the *literal*. The whole life that came out from the Spirit, all the knowledg of the gospel, all the ordinances of Gods house, &c. all is gone into captivity, and lieth buried in the Land of *Babilon*. O how poor hath God made the true seed! O how low hath God brought the life of his son! *Judgment hath begun at the house of God*, and he hath judged his people very severely. He hath scourged them with *Scorpions*, and hath not spared the purest light or life of their Spirits! He hath brought down their glory to the dust! There is no poverty like this, when God strippeth his people: There is no abasement like this, when God bringeth down his people. Well may they be a spectacle of derision to the Spirit of man, for they are poor indeed, they are low indeed. And they are made poor by the Lord, they are brought low by the Lord! He with whom they entrusted their riches, he by whom they looked to be established, he hath impoverished

poverished them, he hath thrown them down, 'tis he that hath laid them in that very dust, where they lye bleeding panting and gasping.

But what shall become of *Jacob*? shall he sink thus? shall he be ever thus poor? or shall he be enriched and lifted up again? Yes, surely he shall. O but how? O Lord God, by whom shall *Jacob* arise? for he is small. Which way can *Jacob* ever be set up again? Why the Lord will do it. The Lord who hath stripped him of this life, will enrich him with a better life. The Lord who hath thrown him down from this height, will lift him up to a greater height. Those riches which he had before, will be but poverty in compare with these riches: and that high estate wherein he was before, will be but lowness in compare with this height. The Lord hath not made his people poor for nothing, nor laid them low for nothing, but that in this poor and low estate, he might lay a foundation for a rich and exalted estate for them. The Lord doth not suffer the Spirit of man to be so rich and high for nothing, but 'tis that he might bring him low enough, that in this height he might lay the foundation of his abasement: Nor doth God make his people so poor empty and miserable for nothing, but that he might raise them high enough, that he might make them happy enough. And when the Lord bringeth them forth and this life in them, then shall they sing this song with joy and delight in their Spirits unto the Lord, *The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich, he bringeth low, and lifteth up.*

VER.

VER. 8. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the begger from the dunghil, to set them among Princes, and to make them inheris the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lords, and he hath set the World upon them.*

THIS is the strait and low condition of the seed, they are brought to the *dust*, to the *dunghil*. Their poverty brings them to the *dust*, and their beggery to the *dunghil*. The life of God commonly breaks forth in the poor of this World: but that poverty is only an outward tipe of the other poverty, which they are to taste severall waies in the seasons thereof. For notwithstanding they are outwardly poor, yet by the possession and enjoyment of this life they become the only rich. But now when this life is laid low, when they are stripped of this life, then they are poor indeed, then they are brought to a state of beggery, then they rowle themselves in the dust, covering their faces with shame and confusion, then they seek out any dunghil for a little warmth and refreshment. O how is the precious seed of God put to it in the day of its poverty and abasement, when the Lord killeth it, when the Lord layeth it flat!

But the Lord will not alwaies let this precious life lye in the dust, nor these poor beggers on the dunghil; but he will raise them up from the dust, he will lift them up from the dunghil. The Spirit of his life will enter into them, revive and raise them, yea the strength of his Arme wil lift them up out of all their graves, from under all their bonds, misery, and oppression.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the begger from the dunghil.

The Spirit of the seed, together with the Spirit of God in the seed (which alwaies accompaineth them and

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partaketh with them, though he doth not alwaies manifest himself to them) hieh in misery, in death, in the grave, till the Lord raise him. Man will into death and out of death by the council of his own Spirit, but the seed is led in and out only by the advice and strength of the Spirit of the Lord. When the Lord takes away all his precious things, yea the very life of his Spirit, he lets it go: when the Lord returns life and strength unto him, he receives it again; and till then he cannot live, nor act, nor be fed, nor clothed. But the Spirit of man will rather (after its seeming death) come forth again in any manner of vanity, then endure this estate of poverty, death, and desolation.

To set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.

There are high and low in every estate, in every change, in every condition. It was so in the Kingdom of Israel (which was the first grand tipe) it was so also in the Church of the New Testament, though not after the former manner; and it is to be yet so again in the next most glorious dispensation. There shall be great ones and small ones, Princes and people. Now the Lord, who is the disposer of all estates and conditions, especially here in the resurrection of this life, which lay so long dead, will dispose of these poor beggers among the Princes, They shall inherit and reign in the earth of God; yea they shall administer justice and judgment in the World. They, with Christ, shall rule all nations with a rod of iron. Christ shall be the great King, and they shall be Kings with him. Christ, who was laid lowest, shall be the cheif; and they who have been laid lowest next, shall be next him in glory. Every thing must be disposed of in righteousness, according to its degree of life. The strongest and greatest degree of life is appointed to the hardest work, to the greatest misery:

Therefore the greatness and depth of misery, doth point out the greatness and height of glory.

To set them among princes.

There are many deaths and many lives the one whereof maketh way for the other. The life of one dispensation makes way for its death, and its death makes way for the life of another. But there is a final death, and a final life. There is a perfect death a full death. Christ died once, and death had *no more dominion over him*. So the seed shall dy but this once, for then God will raise them up to live, and they shall dy no more. This life shall swallow up all death. This riches shall drown all poverty, so as it shall never be able to overtake them any more. Now they shall be princes in the Kingdom of God among the people of God for ever. He that dieth truly and perfectly, as Christ did, and as the true seed do, what should he need to dy any more? Indeed they may have many various pangs of one and the same death, but all this while they are not thoroughly dead; but when they are dead, *it is finished*. When the seed hath so died in them, as by its death to kill all the life of the flesh perfectly (even in the inmost principle of the root of it) it shall afterwards at the last rise up, and be lifted up to live purely, as a Prince, in and with God for ever in his own Kingdom.

And to make them inherit the throne of glory.

When God raiseth up his seed, then will he give them their inheritance, he will raise them up in life to the possession of that life which belongeth to them. They shall then have a Kingdom, a throne, as he hath promised them. They shall have a throne in Gods earth, they shall be Princes among his people (so it is expressed Psal. 113. ver. 7. 8.) The Princes of this World shall be subject unto them, shall hold their right from them and do them homage. They shall not debase themselves

selves as immediately to govern the World (it is below their life; their Spirit and Kingdom, which is not of this World) but only light that wisdom in the Spirit of the World which shall do it, which Spirit oweth subjection and is to be accountable to them, concerning that light and wisdom which is thus borrowed of them. There shall be *a new Heaven and a new earth*: why in this earth shall, they have a throne, in this earth shall they live and reign with Christ. They which have been so poor and miserable above all, shall reign among the Saints. Indeed the whole life shall reign: but yet these, as they have had an especial abasement, so they shall have an especial exaltation. As they have drunk deeper of Christs cup, as have been drenched lower into his baptism: so they shall drink deeper of his glory; And none, which have the true life in them, shall envy this unto them, but shall applaud (from their hearts) that wisdom and love which hath thus ordered it.

This is indeed a *throne of glory*, a truly-glorious throne. The thrones of this World are not worthy the esteem of glory, no more then the persons who sit upon them: (They may flatter one another, but neither have any true worth in them. But here shall be true life a true Spirit of glory sitting on a true throne of glory. And this is reserved for the poor ones of God, who are commonly also poor in this World. These shall at last be raised, when they have perfectly followed Christ in the regeneration, to sit upon throns judging the tribes of his Israel.

And this they are to *inherit*. This is the proper inheritance of the whole life in its proportion, according to its semination and growth: but of these most especially. It is their due, it is the due of their nature, it is the due of their life; it is that which Gods nature oweth to their nature. It is true, that it is as free a gift as if it were not due,

due, and yet it is as due as if it were no gift. Every thing cometh freely from the Father to the son; and yet ever thing that the Father can do for the son, is his due. God will raise them to their *inheritance*, to that which is as properly theirs by all divine law and right, as ever any inheritance here on earth was or could be to any son. It descends most naturally from God to Christ, and from Christ to them. The great *throne of glory* God must not alwaies sit on alone, but Christ must sit there with him: Nor may Christ sit there alwaies alone, but they must sit there with Christ. This is the true descent of things, according to the nature and line of life in God and in Christ; and it is the joy of their hearts to see things thus brought forth and perfected. Now they can sing a song of their poverty, their beggery, their lying in the dust and on the dunghil, seeing it not only past and gone, but also ending in the *throne of glory*.

For the pillars of the earth are the Lords, and he hath set the World upon them. Or the bindges of the earth are the Lords, upon which he hath put the habitable World, as Tremellius renders the words.

This is the reason why God will do this, and the proof that he can do it. He can and will raise the poor out of the dust, and lift the begger from the dunghil, and will set them at the stern, at the very height and top of all, because he hath the dispose of all. He who hath fitted them by their lowness and sufferings for this, may and will exalt them unto this, because he hath all in his hands; because the pillars of this earthly state of things are his, and so he can either change the pillars or set what he will upon the pillars, as he pleaseth.

There are pillars upon which this habitable World or earthly frame of things is set, by which it is upheld, and without which (or at least without some other pillars) it could not possibly stand.

These pillars are the Lords and his Christs, and are upheld by the Lord Christ in the midst of all the great changes of the state of this World, which either hitherto have been wrought, or are yet to be wrought. *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it*, Psal. 75. 3.

Now because the pillars are the Lords, therefore may he dispose of the World as he pleaseth, and therefore will he exalt his own poor and needy ones in the World, and set upon the throne of glory in the sight of all flesh. *The earth is the Lords (and the fulness thereof, the World and all that dwell therein)* and the pillars of the earth are the Lords also; and both are to serve his son and his seed. Seeing therefore the pillars of the earth are the Lords; Christ and his seed (how poor, how low, how mean soever) shall be sure to be uppermost in the day and season of the Lord. *As the mountain of the Lords house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: so shall the Lords King and the Lords people. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion.*

For the pillars of the earth are the Lords, upon which he hath set the World.

Every building hath a foundation and pillars. Pillars which support the building, and a foundation upon which the pillars are fastened.

Christ is the foundation both of Heaven and earth, upon whom the whole fabrick of every dispensation, with all the pillars thereof are fastened, and by whom they are supported.

The pillars of every dispensation, are that radical light and strength which God lets out in the dispensation. That light, that strength, which God lets out from Christ in any dispensation whatsoever, those are the pillars whereby that building is upheld, and those

pillars are stayed by Christ, the root on whom they are fastened, which so long as they receive influence from Christ, they are able to uphold the building. Thus that light and strength which God let out to the Jews under the law by Moses (which he often refreshed by the same Spirit in his Prophets) were the pillars of their dispensation, and so that light and strength which God let out upon the Apostles and primitive Christians by the Spirit of his son, were the pillars of their dispensation. The former of these were the pillars of the Jewes Heaven and of the Jewes earth, and the latter of these were the pillars of the new Heaven and of the new earth among the scattered Gentiles.

But besides this earth of Gods, there is the common earth of man kind, the common estate of the World, which hath its foundation and Pillars also. It also is founded upon Christ, in its way and after its kind, and it hath its Pillars (as well as its foundation) which are reason or common wisdom and strength of man; or that light and strength of nature which is in the bottom of the Spirit of man, from whence springs that common desire after common righteousness which is generally found in man, which he testifieth both by his seeking after it, and by his free assent to the exercise of it. This is the foundation of lawes and government in nations. By this the World is up held: Were it not for this it could not hold together, but hell would violently break forth and swallow up the earth, yea the earth would break in pieces, and of it self sink into hell. Now these pillars are also the Lords: These came from the Lord, these belong to the Lord, these uphold the present estate of the World by and according to the will of the Lord. What changes soever may be made, and however the habitable earth may be turned up side down (as it hath been often in the several parcels of it already,
and

and will be so universally against the day of the Lord, even at that time when *the Lord shall arise to shake terribly the earth*) yet it returneth and sealeth again, because Christ the foundation upholdeth those Pillars whereupon it is fastened. Why doth not the earth fall quite in pieces, and vanish quite away, when it and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved. Why this is the reason, *I bear up the Pillars of it*, Psal. 75. 3. As long as these Pillars remain, they will be able to sustain it, not withstanding all those violent concussions and grievous meltings with may befall. While Christ feeds the Spirit of the World will live: but when Christ once takes a way their staff of bread, they immediately fail.

Now these Pillars being thus the Lords, he may both tois the earth up and down at present, and make what change he seeth good at last. And this is the change which he hath foretoid he will make, He will exalt his poor low despised people to the top of all. They shall *inherit the throne of glory*: and the earth shall lye in emptiness, in shame, in confusion and darkness, in bonds, in death, &c. and shall have no more light, no more life, no more wisdom, &c. then they shall let out unto them. The very principle of the Spirit and life of man shall live no further, then as it is fed by their principle of life, read Psal. 2. Psal. 46. Psal. 47. Psal. 149. and Isa. Ch. 2. and see how God tears the World in pieces, not ceasing till he hath brought all into subjection unto himself, unto his son, and unto his people in the day of their visitation, redemption, and exaltation.

VER. 9. *He will keep the feet of his Saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.*

Here is the great safety of the seed of God, and the overturning of the Spirit and principle of man, with the necessary ground thereof.

He will keep the feet of his Saints.

The Lord will preserve the feet of all the seed of his holy child Jesus, so that none of them shall dash them against a stone. The greatest prevailing of the enemy over the Saints, is against their feet. The Serpent may bruise the heel of the seed, and make them (in a sence) stumble and fall; but their stumbling is no stumbling, nor their fall no fall (for they shall rise again with advantage) as the others standing is no standing. *Rejoyce not against me o mine enemy, though I fall I shall rise again; though I set in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me.* Now if their feet shall be secure (which were the things most ready to trip, and upon which the enemy had the most if not the only advantage) how safe shall they be! In what danger can they be of treading awry, of falling, of stumbling, of wandering, whose feet the Lord preserves? It notes the great safety of the Saints, and their wonderful exactness in the paths of life. The Lord will lead them out of all the paths of vanity, into that very way of life and holiness wherein their Spirits desire to be: and they shall not miss therein, for the Lord will look to their feet. *The waifaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* The path shall be so plain and cleer, and the guidance so certain, and the protection so full and compleat, that there shall be no danger of erring, no not so much as for travellers, though they never passed the way before, and though they

they be never so ignorant, never so foolish, never so unfit to enquire, understand, or hit the way. There shal be no more erring for the seed, when once they come here. They shal no more run astray, like wandering sheep, being alwaies under the eye of the shepherd. The wisest, the most experienced, have not hitherto been able to look to their own feet, but have now and then missed: but the Lord is able and wil look to the feet of the most weak and foolish.

He will keep the feet of his Saints.

The Lord hath hitherto, as it were, set up his people. He hath given them a stock of light, a stock of life, and bid them look to themselves: and alas how soon have they trifled away al, and come to poverty! But now the Lord wil trust them no more, but look to them himself. He wil keep their feet: He wil watch them so narrowly now, that they shal never be able hence forward to step aside. They shal never move one step toward sin and vanity again, but walk entirely, fully, and perfectly with the Lord, according to the largeness of his waies, and according to the largeness of his heart, which the largeness of that life, which he hath sown and caused to spring up in them, shal fully answer.

He will keep the feet of his Saints.

The Lord will speak peace unto his people, and they shal not return to folly. He wil look to their feet, yea and their hearts too, and cause them to walk in his waies. They shal not squander away their life, and return into the principle of their own fleshly Spirit (as they have done in al dispensations wherein life hath been let forth upon them hitherto:) but God, who placeth them upon the throne, wil establish them in the throne: Such light, such life, such power, such a preience of the Lord shal break forth upon them, and be so continual-ly with them, as they shal not be liable to miscarry,

neither by any force from without, nor by any deceit or inclination from within.

And the wicked shall be silent in darkness.

The Lord wil deliver the righteous out of prison, and put in the wicked in their stead. They stood al this while *in slippery places*, and now they sink into that darkness into which they have been hitherto sliding. Indeed this seemeth to be the portion of the righteous : They are in darkness, and silent there : *He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath laid it upon him* : Christ was, *as a lamb, dumb before the shearer*, so opened he not his mouth, when the hour and power of darkness overtook him. But light is sown for the righteous in their darkness, and darkness is sown for the wicked in their light. Life is sown in death, and death is sown in life : Peace is sown in trouble, and trouble is sown in peace : Liberty is sown in bonds, and bonds are sown in liberty : Riches and ornaments are sown in poverty and nakedness, and poverty and nakedness is sown in riches and sumptuous raiment : Health and salvation is sown in sickness and destruction, and sickness and destruction are sown in health and salvation. *Christ and his seed* (Christ in his day, his seed in theirs) are *hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and in prison*; but the Spirit of man is frolick and lusty. Christ and his seed are continually under the exercises of their Father, by way of preparation for their life, to fit their Spirits for their inheritance : the Spirit of the man for the most part is in enjoyment. But know, o man, that that life which now enjoyes is prepared for death, and that life which is hereafter to enjoy is now prepared and fitted by death and sufferings for it.

The wicked shall be silent in darkness.

The wicked one is *Satan*, or the Spirit of man filled with *Satan*; as the holy one is *Christ*, or the new nature,

ture, filled with the anointing of God. Satan is Satan under al his vails: and the Spirit of man is wicked under al his covers and appearances of holiness. The Spirit of man was universally seized upon and poisoned by Satan, so that it is wicked and cannot but be wicked, even in the midst of al the changes that are made in it (even by God himself, in any of his dispensations) until its very nature be changed.

The proper estate and place of this wicked one is *darkness*. Whither should a dark nature, a dark principle go, but into darkness? There is a root of darkness beneath al their light, yea al their light is darkness, al their knowledg is ignorance, al their faith is unbelief; and therefore what is proper both for it and them; but *the land of darkness*? Al the excellencies of Religion, of knowledg, of righteousness, of faithlove, &c. which are only drawn out of the Spirit of man, or meerly formed in the Spirit of man by somewhat let out upon him from God, they are either of the Spirit of man, or of that which will pass away from him. Now if they be of the Spirit of man, when the Spirit of man is condemned they cannot be justified: or if they be passed away from him, he cannot be justified by them. The Lord will take away from man al that righteousness and holiness wherein he trusted, and leave him as naked as he found him in the day when he first pitied and clothed him, as is largely expressed in that tipe thereof Ezek. 16.

The wicked shall be silent in darkness.

The proper posture of the dark Spirit is silence. What should he be talking and taking upon him to instruct, who is in the dark and seeth not? The Spirit of man, as it is now in the light, so it is also the great talker, the great instructor in the things of God, the great boaster of its life and hopes, the great threatner of death and destruction to the seed, who appear so weak, foolish,

lish, and contemptible to its eye. *Truth* is silent, *Life* is silent, *God* is silent; Man and Satan keep al the baffle. True faith, true love, true knowledge, true life is sown: That which sprouteth up so fast, and maketh such a shew in the World, is the art and invention of man, the birth of his flesh, which will now take upon him to have the true nature, and to be the true heir, and wil not be silenced. There is no opening the mouth of the seed, and there is no stopping the mouth of man. But when the Spirit of man shal be unmasked, and that darkness opened upon him which is his proper center, he shal not then have a word to say. When Christ shal say to him, *Freind, how camest thou in hither, not having the wedding garment?* not having the garment of light: and commands him to be cast into utter darkness, there he shal learn silence. He shal go from the throne (or judgment-seat) speechless, and remain silent in that region of darkness, to which (according to the nature and course of his Spirit) he is most righteously adjudged. *The wicked shal be silent in darkness.*

For by strength shal no man prevail.

This was it undid them: This is that which destroyeth al sorts of wicked men, even al the enemies of God, their own strength. This was it which undid *Adam* at first: and this is it which undoth al the sproutings forth from the root of *Adams* life, even in the midst of al the advantages they receive (by vertue of any new dispensation) to refresh and exalt their life, namely their own strength. The strength which they receive in dispensations from God (which strength becometh their strength) undoth them. They feel strength, they receive strength, they have strength, they find it in themselves, and cannot but hope to prevail by strength: for to what end else was it given? and to what use else doth it serve? The *Jewes* could not but think to be

saved

saved by the strength they received under *Moses* : and the *Gentiles* thought their mountain firmly settled by the light and strength they received through the hands of the *Apostles* : But as the strength let out upon *Adam* at first , would not preserve him : No more wil the strength let out upon any of the sons of *Adam* (in any dispensation since) preserve them : but it must be a change of the nature of *Adam* , by a new seed , in which new life comes : and that seed must be planted in a new soil too (in a soil suitable to its nature) when it lives. For though the substance of the seed cannot perish any where , yet it can thrive no where but in its own earth : and therefore man , if he had this life would not know what to do with it , it would be of no service to him. Man would fain be master of this life , but he doth not know what he desireth , for it is in no wise fit for him : nor would it prove of any benefit , but of great danger to him.

By strength shall no man prevail.

This is true already in the light of God , it is true now to that eye which is enlightened by God : but it shal one day be most visibly true to every eye. Indeed , in this World now the prevalency is by strength : What prevaileth here , but the wisdom and strength of man ? Thus things go up in the outward state , yea thus things are exalted in Religion also , namely according to the reason , wisdom and strength of man. (It is true , at sometimes God , by an especial power , breaks and confounds the wisdom and strength of man : but for the general course of things it is otherwise.) But yet al this prevailing is no true prevailing at present , it is no prevailing in the true state of things : and (such as it is too) it shal have its end , and be so no more neither. Al the ground that is thus gained must be lost again , and so in truth it is not gained : and there wil

be no such gaining of ground any more. But now, That victory, that prevailing which ariseth not from the wisdom or strength of the creature (whether stirred up in it, or new kindled, or heightened by vertue of any dispensation from above) but from the new life of God, and from that power wherewith he feeds this life, that victory, that prevailing must needs abide. In the upshot of all, when things come to be truly and fully opened, it will appear that all that man hath gotten by his own strength (with all the strength which was added to him, over and above, to make him stronger) is worth nothing, and will come to nothing. When this strength, with all that was effected by it, shall be dissolved; then all its attainments will prove but loss: and yet there will be no such attainments any more neither, *for by strength shall no man prevail.* All the darkness and weakness of the seed shall not be able to keep them out of life, or to make them stumble in the way of life: and all the light and strength of the spirit of man shall not be able to keep him out of darkness, or to comfort him and relieve him in his darkness; but there he shall remain shut up in emptiness, in misery, in weakness, in silence. *He will keep the feet of his Saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.*

VER. 10. *The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of Heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and hee shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his anointed.*

Here is the great result and upshot of things. Here is that which shall down, and that which shall up, together with the way whereby the one shall down and the other up. The Lord hath long lain still, and now he

he ariseth up to judgment; and (his mighty spirit being once stirred) he laieth stoutly about him. He breaketh forth with his power of destruction and salvation both at once. He dasheth his enemies in pieces; He breaks down all that stands in the way of his own holy life and nature; and hee refresheth the Nature and Spirit of his Son. He kills, and he makes alive. He taketh away strength, and hee giveth strength. Hee knocks off and beates to the earth the horns of the enemy and the avenger, and lifts up the meek and righteous horn of his Holy Child Jesus. *I have long time holden my peace, I have been still and refrained my self: now will I cry like a travailing woman, I will destroy, and devour at once.* From the beginning of the World hitherto, I have let my poor spouse and her seed go to wrack and ruine; the World hath abused her, and laughed to scorn that holy life and nature, which is the delight of my heart: But now I will stir up the might of my jealousy; and destroy and devour at one bit that spirit, which hath thus exalted it self over her: *The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of Heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judg the ends of the earth, and he shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his anointed.*

The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces.

The adversaries of the Lord are the corrupt spirit of man and Satan; who interrupt the sweet pure life and converse between God and his creature, by the interposition of sin and death. The enemy of God is the uncircumcised spirit of man, wherein Satan dwels. He who hath the flesh of his spirit circumcised, he is at peace with God, he is in covenant with God, he is in union with God, he is a friend of God: but he that is uncircumcised, remaineth in his enmity.

Now against the Lord, against his Christ and against his seed, do these uncircumcised ones fight. The war

hath been from the beginning between these two seeds, and will be to the end, even til one of them be perfectly overcome and destroyed. The wisdom of God fighteth against the wisdom of the flesh, and the wisdom of the flesh fighteth against the wisdom of God: and that which is the seed of the one (that which is sown, springs up, and is brought forth by the one) cannot but fight against the other. Let the wisdom of God start forth any way, man cannot but disclaim and disown it: (indeed he cannot but own that wisdom which his flesh seeth and acknowledgeth, that wisdom which suiteth with his flesh: but the truth, always appearing in a way contrary to the wisdom of his flesh, hee cannot but oppose.) And let the wisdom of man appear under the most sweet, innocent, yea most spiritual disguise, yet the Lord cannot but prosecute it as his enemy. There is a foundation of enmity laid between the Spirit of God and the flesh of man, and they cannot agree: and this foundation is not laid upon any particular appearance, but upon their natures, so that it is utterly indissoluble in this present line and state of things.

The adversaries of the Lord.

The spirit of man and the spirit of Satan (in their nature, principles, designs, yea in their whole course and progress) are very adverse to the Spirit of the Lord. They are alwaies opposing, alwaies fighting, either in an open or in an undermining way, either by open force, or by secret stratagems. One while they directly oppose the life, the waies, the ordinances of the Lord: but when they are overcome there in open battel, they seem to yeild and become friends; and so enter into the wayes, into the truths, into the practises which the Lord appoints, yet secretly nourishing and exercising their enmity there. There is no *Temple* which the Spirit of the Lord hath hitherto reared; which the uncircumcised and unclean spirit

rit of man hath not been entering into. *Antichrist and his seed* (under the shape and resemblance of Christ and his seed) will never cease entering into the house of God and undertaking the worship of God: but they so fill it with their abominations, that there is no room or place left for the pure life to be there; but they are faine to remain without. The spirit of man and of Satan doth hunt the seed out of all the ways, passages and dispensations of life; They take the ammunition and fortresses which God made strong for them, fortifying them against them: They are mighty prevalent, by their great wisdom and power, in this their day: They have, ever since their first prevailing over that primitive light and strength, which was dispenced to the primitive Christians, been so strong, and kept such firm possession, that the truth (the true life) durst not peep forth, but in their way, viz. in a way sutable to the judgment and approbation of flesh: Or if they do permit it, it is in a way of scorn and contempt, because they see they can suppress it as they please. Thus hath every dispensation of God been gained and possessed by the spirit of man: and yet mans spirit is not purified by it, but corrupteth it, making it unfit for any pure use, and fit only for his own unclean nature.

Shall be broken to pieces.

The adversaries of the Lord are now in their strength, they are not broken, no, they are very whole. *Sion* is broken, the holy seed is broken, but the spirit of man is strong: But the spirit of man shall bee broken in all his foolish wayes, and the seed established in every path of the Lord. The enemy indeed is now pretty quiet, why? Because he hath all in his hand. *The strong man armed, keepeth his house in peace.* There is nothing appeareth able to deal with him, and therefore he needeth not to rouse up his strength. The wisdom of God appeareth

not any way worth the wisdom of mans contending with. There is no strength, visible, able to give a considerable assault to the spirit of man, and therefore man goeth on quietly his own way, and laughs at the folly of the seed, letting them alone to fall by their own weakness. But, when life and power begin to stir in the seed, the spirit of man and Satan will busle up their forces; and then ye shall see what strength they have, and what strength God hath, who alone can deal with them. Then the nations will associate, when the Lord shal come in good earnest to set up *his Christ and his seed*; for the spirit of man cannot brook it, but *the Heathen will rage*, yea and those that difference themselves from the Heathen, and will needs go for the people of God (and in compare with the Heathen may, in some sence, well be accounted so) will *imagin a vain thing*. The wisdom of man, the strength of the spirit of man, which hath hitherto been divided, when it seeth its life in good earnest laid at, will unite together and try to break these bands in sunder, and to cast away these cords of the life, power and Spirit of Christ. But what will be the issue to these adversaries of the Lord? They shall be broken to pieces. He shall break them with the rod of iron, he shall dash them in pieces like a potters vessel. The strength of man, in its greatest union, shall not be able to keep the seed under any longer, nor to keep themselves free from subjection to the seed. Let them come as strong as they can against them, they shall fall before them. Though they compass Gods Christ about like Bees, yet in the name of the Lord will he destroy them. *Associate your selves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces, and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird your selves, and ye shall be broken in piece. ; gird your selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take councel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.* Isa. 8. ver. 9. 10. Tis true, ye may now get the better
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of it: Now is your time of life, of strength, of prevalency: But it will not alwaies be so. The Lord will one day know his friends and make known his adversaries.

It is wonderfull to observe the strange state of things in truth, how contrary they are to their present appearance. The true life, the seed of stability and certainty, *Sion the holy hill of God* is covered with *Babylon*; is hid in darkness and confusion: And *Babylon*, the confused spirit of man which hath no root of stability in it, is got into *Sion*, is clothed with *Sion*, appears in *Sion* as if it were the true life scituated there by God. *Anti-Christ* sits in the Temple of God, and *Christ* is thrust out. *The Canaanites dwell in the land*; and *Abraham and his seed have not a foots breadth there*. Man is the only worshipper, he hath all the life, all the enjoyments, all the hope; and the seed, in which is the true life and nature, and which is the only heir, is as it were wholly cast out. The adversaries of the Lord are whole; and the seed of God, the off-spring of his Son, they who are grand-children from himself, and have his own very life and nature in them, they are broken to pieces, are not able to stand before the wisdom and power of man. But the Lord hath a day wherein he will set things to rights, and bring every thing to its own place: and then every adversary how whole soever now, shall be dashed in pieces. *The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces.*

Out of Heaven shall he thunder upon them.

Thunder is one of the most dreadfull things to the creature that can bee, and one of the most irresistibile things. It is the terrible and dreadful voice of the Lord, which cometh down from Heaven, and maketh the earth to shake and tremble. It is natural to the creature to fear thunder, yea and the whole creation lieth open to the force of it. What part of the creation can secure it self, which it shall please God to assault by thunder?

Now

Now this is the way whereby God will overthrow his enemies, *he will thunder upon them out of Heaven.* He will stretch forth his own Almighty Arm to save his people and overthrow them. When the seed of life and the seed of man come to grapple in this field of flesh, were it not for Gods immediate stepping in, the enemy would prevail. There is no power able to deal with the enemies of the Lord, either in their strength or in their stratagems, but the might of the Lord. And did not the Lord himself step in and undertake the quarrel on the behalf of his people, *Jacob would down for ever.* *They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay,* Psa. 18. 18. But how did the Lord deal with them? *The Lord also thundred in the Heavens, and the highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them,* ver. 13. 14. (which was a prophecy of the victory of Christ. *God shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace,* as it was said and fulfilled in another type. *God killed the Canaanites by hailstones,* Josh. 10. 11. *The Stars in their order fought against Sisera.* The Lord discomfited the *Philistins* by thunder, 1 Sam. 7. 10. And at the seventh Angels pouring out his vial *there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings,* and the greatest earthquake that ever was, Revel. 16. 18. and *a great hail,* ver. 21. So again ch. 11. 19. *And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in his Temple the Ark of his Testament, and there were lightnings, and voices, and thundrings, and an earth-quake, and great hail.* The Lord will consume *Anti-Christ*, in whom is the spirit of all enmity and opposition against himself, his Son and people, by the spirit of his mouth of his Son, and by the brightness of his coming: for from the brightness of Christ shall issue out that *blackness, darkness, and sempest*, which shall both discover *Anti-Christ* to himself, and

and drive him to his own place, see Psal. 18. ver. 11.
 12. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup, Psal. 11. 6.

The Lord shall judg the ends of the earth.

To judg is to declare and administer justice; to state the case righteously between all parties, and to execute accordingly. *The Lord shall judg*, He will state the case fairly between himself and his people, between man and his people, between sin and Satan and his people, and will proceed upon all according to the truth of judgment. *The Lord will judg the ends of the earth*: God will cause his right to spring up there, and there will he sever between the precious and the vile, even there will he judg between cattle and cattle. He will judg the spirit of man there, he will judg his own people there. (No person, no place shall escape the judgment of the Lord, no not the most by-corner of the world: nay that which seemeth remotest from the notice and judgment of the Lord, even there may judgment begin.

1. For his own people, he will judg them; which may denote two things. First his chastising of them (which goeth very far, even to the cutting off and utter rejection of that which is not the truth) so Ebr. 10. 30. *The Lord shall judg his people*. He will look to his own family, and not suffer them to go on in sin uncontrouled. *The soul that sinneth shall dye*; This is the Law the Lord hath set up among his people, and there he will be sure to execute it. *The foolish Virgins* who are destitute of the true oyl, shall not be admitted into the Kingdom of life, but be thrust out among the common strumpets. Secondly, It denoteth his rescuing and relieving of them. He will judg between them all, and them that hate them. Hee will judg to them that life, that salvation, that inheritance which belongs to them. *A judg to the people of*

God, signifies all one with a redeemer or Saviour, one to save them from their enemies, and from the hand of all that hate them, Luc. 1. 7. So Christ was, as all the Judges raised up in Israel, before him, were in that respect types of him. *God shall judg the ends of the earth*, that is, hee shall redeem, he shall save all his seed all his people there. *All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.* When God visiteth his seed, there shall be none of his seed, none of his life in any corner of the world, but he shall seek out and redeem: nay, as he hath most especially sown his seed, his life, his precious ones in the by-corners of the world; so shall they be especially sought out and redeemed there.

2. *For his enemies.* First, he will judg death and destruction to all that oppose his people. All that resist this life shall dye. *Behold your God will come with vengeance*, God will come and revenge all the misery and oppression of his people upon the cruel spirit of man. *And the righteous shall rejoyce when he seeth the vengeance:* The tender spirit of the seed, which hath alwaies been so mercifull, (praying for the persecuting spirit of the world (as being very loth to have it suffer) shall now delight in destruction. That destruction which the Lord executeth in the midst of all his bowels, when it is truly seen and understood by them, shall not be at all painful to their bowels. Death and destruction shall now open upon their own inheritance; and the seed of God, which have alwaies been hitherto troubled with it, shall now be glad to see it return to its own place. Secondly, God will judg submission and subjection of the greatest glory of man to this life, to this his people thus quickened and brought forth. That which will live, be it never so high, never so excellent, must lye at its feet. *The nation and Kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish*, Isa. 60. 12. Now the greatest Monarchs of the earth must come down

down, when God doth indeed exalt his Church and people: yea now the whole wisdom and strength of man, which hitherto hath reigned, must learn to serve and obey, see Isa. 45. 14. and 49. 23. and 60. 14.

And he shall give strength unto his Kings.

The Lords King is Christ, which this woman his Church is to bear unto him. *Mary* was an embleme or type, she bare the flesh: but *the Church* is the truth, and she conceives, bears, brings forth the truth, the substance, the spirit, the seed. She is the true Wife or spouse to the Father; she hath the womb of the wisdom of his spirit, out of which Christ issueth. A woman is weak and foolish, yet out of her womb issueth the strong and wise male: Christ the wisdom and strength of God, who is the Saviour of his Church, cometh out of the weak womb of the Church. It was not *Mary* that bare Christ, she bare and brought forth but the flesh, but the shadow or garment of Christ: but it was *the woman clothed with the Sun* (viz. the perfect light of God) and *having the Moon* (all the weak, derivative light of this world) *under her feet* which brings forth *the man-child, which shall rule all Nations.*

This seed, this Christ, is sown in great poverty and weakness (according to the pattern which he laid down in his fleshly state here in this World. He is the poor one, the sick one, the weak one, &c. Who is forsaken like him? Who is deaf like him? Who is dumb like him? Who is blind like him? Man hath his eye enlightened, and his ear and tongue opened; but it is not so with Christ, it is not so with the seed of God. *Who is blind, but my servant? Or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind, as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lords servants?* Isa. 42. 19.

But the Lord will give him strength. When the Lord cometh to *judg the ends of the earth*, he will judg life to

his seed, *strength to his King*: and according to his judgment will he issue it out unto him, so that the weak one shall become strong. Hee that lay beneath the whole creation (in sickness, in poverty, in misery and weakness) shall rise up in sufficient strength to manage all the affairs of God, even his greatest affairs of government, as becomes his King. As he shall want no authority, so hee shall want no ability to manage and execute his authority.

And exalts the horn of his Anointed.

Gods King is Christ: yet have I set my King upon my Holy Hill of Zion: Gods anointed is Christ; He is the Holy one of God, whom God anoints with his own most Holy Oyl. (This is the nature which stoweth purely from God, and which God hath chosen to fill with himself.) He is the first and the chiefly anointed. He is the head, upon which the whole ointment is poured, and from which it runs down to the rest of the members.

The horn of this anointed is his saving power, or that vertue of the Spirit whereby Christ throweth down his enemies, and delivereth his people. He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. What is mans horn, but his wisdom, his understanding, his righteousness, his strength? It is the life and vertue of his human nature, whereby he is able both to defend and offend. This God layeth flat, he breaketh it in pieces, and exalts the horn of Christ, in so much as there is no salvation, no righteousness, no strength will hence forward be efficacious, but Christs: and Christs shall bee efficacious to the full. There is no part, no piece of salvation which Christ shall not effect: He shall perfectly raise up, and perfectly throw down. There is no weakness or strength shall be able to hinder his salvation. His people are now here so weak, so low, so crushed and horned down, but hee can and will redeem and deliver

deliver them: His enemies are no where so strong, so high, and so deeply rooted, but he can and will overturn and subdue them.

Exalt the horn of his anointed.

The salvation, the horn of Christ God will exalt: For there shall no other salvation stand, and this salvation shall abundantly prevail. By all other strength whatsoever shall no man prevail, and by this strength shall the weakest be able to prevail. No man shall taste of mercy or salvation in any kind, further then they subject to him, and take his bands and cords upon them. And he shall not only save his people and his own earth, but the common earth of mankind also: yea the very gross earth of this outward created world shall be blessed, and bring forth its fruit to them that subject to him; but the rebellious shall dwell in a dry land. Here will be an exaltation of Christs horn indeed, when none shall be saved but by him: when destruction shall devour every salvation, but that which is his in the true nature of it: when ~~he~~ shall save all his, yea and the whole race of mankind which shall learn subjection to him: when he shall spare no power that stands in his way, but dash in pieces the Princes and Potentates of the earth, that combine against him, like a potters vessel. Why this will God do for Christ at the resurrection of his body, at the resurrection of that life in his members, which he hath freely sacrificed unto God in them, as well as in himself. When the whole cup is drunk, when the measure of Christs sufferings in his body is filled up, when the whole life is sown and risen again; then will the God of glory appear in it, honouring and exalting it. This is the day wherein God will say to Christ, *Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee*: and wherein Christ will say to God, *Behold I and the children which thou hast given me*. That death and resurrection which was trans-

acted upon his elementary body, was but a type of this, yet it was a most glorious truth, and had a vertue answerable to its nature: But *the body is Christ*; That is the Lords body which he will sacrifice to himself, raise up, appear and live in for ever. This is that flesh which God soweth that he may raise it up in Spirit, though he will not loose this elementary flesh neither, but raise it up also with it. Amen.

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A
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FRAGMENTS,

Gathered up

For the use of such as are in great distress
for food in these necessitous times :

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Brief Expositions (with observations sometimes)
upon several Scriptures, which may afford some oyl
to mitigate the grievous wound, which God hath
opened in some of the spirits of his people in
this generation, and a little to stay their faint-
ing souls, which are daily ready to fail
and melt away, for want of the pre-
sence of their God with them, and
from his fierceness of his indig-
nation toward them.

ISA. 41. 17.

*Awake, awake, stand up O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand
of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the
cup of trembling, and wrung (or sucked) them out.*

ISA. 41. 1. 2.

*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, Speak ye to the heart,
to Jerusalem, and crie unto her that her appointed time is accom-
plished: that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lords
hand double for all her sins.*

LONDON, Printed by *John Macock*, 1655.



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To Christians in Spirit, who pant after the life and truth of the Gospel, under that dark vail which hath been long cast over the formerly glorious dispensation of it, groaning, under their present dreadful captivity, for the redemption and salvation of the Lord.

Et me for once a little presume, saying, My dear Brethren in the life and Spirit of our LORD Jesus Christ.

Great have been the prevailings of the powers of darkness over the truth and power of life: and o how exceeding bitter is the grave of Christ; not only to this weak nature, but even also to the Nature and Spirit of Christ, which hath a truer tast both of joy and sorrow; then our fleshy capacity can advance us to! Surely the life is deeply hid, being laid very low by mighty overwhelming oppressions, and being become so unlike to it self, that it is even utterly disdained by the flesh, yea and much unknown to it self also. We know not our selves, nor one another: We enjoy not our selves, nor one another: We live not in our God, nor our God in us: That life which we now have, lives not; but it is swallowed up by death, and miserably enslaved in the land of its captivity: The times of refreshing are not yet come from the presence of the Lord, and our life is 'een worn out, and can hardly fetch breath, in this his great estrangement and absence from us. What shall we do? We want our strength. How can we walk? We want our light. How shall we advise our own hearts or one another? We want our Councillor. How

Shall

shall

shall we be healed of the grievous diseases in our spirits? We want our Physician. How shall we rubb on through those grievous troubles we meet with in the World, and those far more grievous calamities and distresses we meet with in our own souls? We want our Comforter. O good God; what a reproach are thy people become throughout all the earth! (how loathsome is the estate of their spirits to the wisdom of their own fleshly nature! when wilt thou circumcise them, and rinde it away? O Lord, in death there is no knowledge, in the grave there is no remembrance of thee! The fleshly nature is stupified in its grave, and the spiritual nature in its. When the soul is but neer the brink of distress and confusion, how disturbed is the knowledge; and how troublesome the thoughts concerning God? (I remembered God and was troubled, I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed.) But when it is crucified and tumbled into the pit, all this life is gone. That which relieves in every condition else, torments in this: for this is a very living death; wherein, though there is a stupefaction to all the former motions, comforts, and whole state and course of life; yet there is also a quickness of sense to its present pain and misery. The flesh (I mean the wisdom which man naturally hath in him, or which he hath contracted under any of the dispensations of God) may either laugh at us, or more modestly bear the relation of what hath befallen us, and stand amazed at it; but who can rightly measure our state? By the withdrawing of God, who is our life from our life, we are become men of sorrow; and acquainted with griefs: by his wounding us, we are become very sore; by his stripping us, we are become very naked and loathsome: by his pulling down his fabrick in our spirits, we are become desolate and faint all the day. O God, is there no relief, no comfort, no refreshment, no support to be had any more? Is our way hid from the Lord? Is our judgement passed over by our God? That which God himself hath judged needful for poor distressed spirits, why doth he refuse to administer

us? Is there not a time to build, as well as to pluck down? O who shall come out of everlasting burnings, and live in thy sight! If thou wouldst once be with us in the water and in the fire, we would no longer fear them, nor complain of them.

But it is time for me to stop both my heart and mouth, my spirit having been so often weary of complaining and giving vent, as well as of restraining and shutting in it self; both which I have sometimes sensibly felt to arise from the flesh. The poor fleshy nature, when it is hunted out of its sweet paths of devotion, and quite tired with silent suffering and expectation, its pain and extremity growing more and more upon it, would at length fain refresh it self a little by its complaints? But the Lord, who skilfully hunteth it, hedgeeth up this path also, for the fuller exercise and death both of this nature, and of the nature of his son, who is veiled with it. I shall therefore turn from these strains; and at present, in stead thereof, try if I may a little search into the cause or ground of this great severity of God toward his people.

The reason why God deals so severely with his people casting them into the fire again and again, is partly, because of their corruption (which both is in the flesh, and also the flesh is continually more and more contracting) which calls for flames from the purity of his nature, especially toward that which he loves: and partly from the nature and end of the life which is given them, which is fited for and ordained to be a sacrifice.

I. Their corruption calls for it. The people of God come not forth pure in any dispensation or condition, and therefore need purifying: The people of God are also continually contracting corruption, and so stand in further need of purifying. They are pure indeed in respect of the world, nor do they again gather the spoils of the world: but yet they have an impurity of their own, and are still gathering spots of their own, from which they need cleansing. God who seeth

through them, he seeth no iniquity nor sin in them, because he pierceth into the rovt and spirit of their nature, looking up on them through the fire, which they having once passed cannot but be perfectly cleansed: yet his cleer eye cannot but discern and observe them as they also are now, and so he is continually complaining of them, his spirit turning from them, and hee frequently tossing them into the furnace of affliction.

The pure nature of the Lord cannot endure impurity, especially in that which he loves and desires nearest to, and communion with. This love, this desire in him, kindles his rage and jealousy: in so much as he doth not seem so farre off from any where else, as toward his dearest beloved. When he cometh forth in judgment, he beginneth with his people, dealing most severely and sharply with them. And though they may pass for pure in compare with the world, yet the Lord loveth the world so alone, and falleth so fellly upon them, as if the world were pure in his eyes, and the beloved of his soul, and as if they were the only impure and hated ones. Now surely this cannot but abase them very much, and lay them very low even before the World, To see abasa that have boasted of God, have borne his name, yea have been owned by him, to be thus banded; and the world, which was so much threatened by the Spirit of the Lord through them, to be spared: yet this prepareth the way to their life, glory and happiness, and to the death, shame and misery of the world.

2. Another part of the reason is, because the life which is bestowed upon the people of God in every dispensation, is given them for to sacrifice; For to serve God with at present, and to sacrifice in the end: Therefore when the Lord hath made use of them in his service a while, he may well hunt, take, kill, and devour that life, which he intended and prepared for that end and use. The life which is sown in this body, is to dye. The life which is to live, is to spring out of the ashes of the sacrifice of this life. The Lord will have his

own seed to suffer death for the World; as well as to save him in the World: and he gives them a life worthy to suffer him, and worthy to be a pattern of death. Christ in the flesh, from first to last must die; as well in every member as in the head. God who spared not that life in the head; will not spare it in any member; but every member as it must live a new; so it must pass through that life which Christ laid down. It must die to its own nature; to its own purest enjoyments; yea to that influence communion and comfort which it had in the spirit. There must not be one grace which is had from the spirit remain: No it must not so much as know the spirit itself any more, so as it had known and enjoyed him in the flesh. All these things were brought forth and intended but for the present, and so must needs pass away. This imperfect nature, this imperfect eye in its imperfect state, in all the parts of it, must melt and be consumed by the heat of the eternal flames, and be no more; and that which is perfect in us shall spring up, and that which is perfect in God shall be enjoyed by us. But in the mean time, it is no unkindness in God to draw veils of death and misery over the greatest life and happiness, which at any time he hath good to impart to us. Nay the greatest pain of the fire, which is necessary to extinguish any degree, or the very nature and spirit of our life, doth not want its due mixture of the greatest sweetness and tenderness of love toward us (what ever we judge of it) as it did not toward Christ, upon whom the most dreadful flames and pain did seem to seize without the least mercy. And if God heard not the voice of Christ (as surely he did not, in that way wherein he expected to have been heard, as Christ himself complained, Psal. 22. v. 1. 2.) What wonder is it if he be deaf, in the same case, to the voice of the same life in any of his members?

The mystery of truth is deep, and not to be fathomed by mans spirit. Who is it can rightly understand and comprehend these things? Sure I am, how plain soever God hath written

written them, yet man can never find them in the Scriptures. Man by the light which he gathereth out of the Scriptures, how strangely doth he read concerning the things of God! Where is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? O Lord God, what an empty thing is this wise vessel man, which maketh such a sound in the world! Happy are they whom thou befoolest in all the waies of mans wisdom, and then openest their ears to hear the skil and learning of thy folly!

I shal conclude this Preface with a word concerning those things which follow, which is only this: That they are not notional, though they contain matter of knowledg in them. my meaning is, They are not such things as the understanding of my nature hath searched out, but such things as I have come to know the nature of, partly by my own need, and partly by their vertue. And conceiving that it may also go hard with others, for their sakes have I sent them abroad in this weak and stammering garb, forgetting that regard to my self in this present outward estate of things, which that little understanding which is yet remaining with me, might instruct me to. If they may prove of service to any such, I have obtained my end: but however I have herein afforded some satisfaction to my own nature, which of it self seeketh their true ease and welfare.

The right enterance

I N T O

T R U E W I S D O M.

P R O V. 9. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.



Wisdom is a skil in the nature of the mind, arising partly from knowledge, partly from experience. It is a true and truly practical understanding, or a knowledge of the nature and use of things appertaining to its self, in its Station and condition. The fool is one that is ignorant, one that knows not what things are, whither they tend, or how to manage them: but he that is wise doth. He that thus knoweth outward things, natural things, is a naturally wise man: He that thus knoweth inward things, spiritual things, is a spiritually wise man.

The wisdom here intended is inward wisdom, spiritual wisdom, before which the other is but folly. He that knows to gain and make use of the whole world wisely, in a natural way, yet in the end may prove a fool. But there is a spiritual wisdom, consisting in the knowledge of spiritual things (of what is spiritually good or evil, advantageous or dangerous) which is true and abiding.

The fear of the Lord is an awful sence of him and respect to him. It causeth serious thoughts concerning him,

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him, a reverend eye, a considerate heart, a strict observation of all his commands either of execution or forbearance. Every word of God is wrighty, every appearance of God is revered, every passage of providence is seriously pondered by them that fear him.

Every thing that is great and above us hath a property in it of working or occasioning fear. God is great in power, in Majesty, in wisdom, in love, in wrath, &c. which when any man cometh to be sensible of, it cannot but work fear in him.

Is the beginning of wisdom.

This is the first step of wisdom. This is the way whereby wisdom enters into the soul. This is the first effect wisdom produceth in the soul. When the wisdom of God once entereth into foolish man, it presently teacheth him to fear him. The true knowledge of things, true wisdom; once taking possession of the heart, seasoneth it with the fear of God, laies this as the first stone in that fabrick of wisdom which it intends to rear up: and this fear being wrought, it also helpeth to make wise. It is a fruit of wisdom in the soul, and it becomes also a root to abundance of fruit. Love is the perfection of wisdom, but fear is the beginning of wisdom. When we become perfect in love, wee become perfect in wisdom: but if we will begin in wisdom, we must begin with fear. So that there are these two things held out here.

1. That true wisdom, true knowledge, teacheth the fear of God, *The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom*, Prov. 15. 33. The first thing which the light of God (in this low, weak, dark estate of man) worketh upon man, is to fear him. And indeed it is a very proper temper for him, fit to season all his motions in this his present condition. Fear is furable both to the estate of a servant, yea and of a son too in his non-age. It did

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not misbecom Christ the son coming in the form of a servant: yea he had the Spirit of God powred out upon him in this respect as well as others, Isa. lxi. 1. *And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.* Mark how it is coupled with *knowledge*, the *fear of the Lord* doth not arise from ignorance, from darkneis, from a legal knowledge of God, but from a true understanding, from Gospel light, from a Gospel Spirit. For indeed the Spirit of the Gospel doth not loose, but comprehend and bring forth more substantially the truth and purity of the Law.

2. *The true fear of God maketh wise.* The fear of God is subservient to the wisdom of God, in cherishing and increasing of it, when it is once down in the soul; yea it furthers the whole building of God in the soule. It is a temper which giveth great advantage to all the instruction, education and nurture of wisdom. The fear of God is not only an effect of wisdom, but a cause of wisdom, it is that which administrech wisdom; that which teacheth to be wise.

There are three things which wisdom teaches, as namely to ponder and consider the (nature course and) end of things, to order things to their end, and to do it by true light, by light suitable to the nature of these things. These are much in the eye and heart of the wise man, and it is the fear of God which both beginneth and keepeth a going these things in his heart.

1. Wisdom teacheth a man to consider what end hee himself and all things tend unto. He finds things here of a various nature, under several dispensations; all which must needs tend to some end, which he to whom they belong guideth them toward according to their natures. When the sound goeth forth concerning the love of

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God, and concerning his wrath (which are the ends to which things tend in their nature and course,) he presently considereth how the one may be avoided, and the other met with. *The wise man foreseeth the storm, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished:* The fool runs on heedlessly into wrath, the wise man seeks the shelter of love.

Now this wisdom, the fear of God beginneth in the soul. Fear causeth the consideration and weighing of these things, which the fearless mind not. And this the fear of God carries on in the soul also. As a mans fear remains, so these remain with him: and as a mans fear slackens, so these considerations also slacken in him. *O happy is the man that feareth alwaies*, for this is the way to keep him with his God, where is perpetual safety: *I will put my fear in their hearts; that they shall not depart from me.*

2. Wisdom teacheth a man to order things to their end. The wise man looks about him, applying himself to become such an one, as may avoid wrath and be embraced by love. He considers how hee may come into and walk in the way of love, that so he may arrive at length in the bosome of love. He looketh now to it to become a tree of righteousness, and to bear fruit of righteousness, that so he may come to the end of righteousness. Hee bethinks himself now of making peace with his adversary in the way, that there may remain no matter of controversie afterward.

The fear of God hath an hand in this peece of wisdom also. *Noah being moved with fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his house.* Fear maketh a man carefull in the whole work of his salvation: *work out your salvation with fear and trembling.* And O how powerfull is the fear of God, both to settle the spirit and to order the conversation! He that hath continually the sense of God

The first foundation of wisdom. 327

upon him, how exact will it make him in his converse, in his dealings, in his very retirements, yea in the inmost thoughts and motions of his heart.

There are three things of great power and efficacy to transform, namely, *The fear of God*, *The love of holines*, and *The love of God*. The fear of God layeth the foundation; from whence there is a proceeding to the love of things, whereby the building is increased; and from the love of things to the love of God, whereby it is perfected.

The fear of God, that begins, and is of mighty power to check and curb the vanity of the mind, and to make it to move toward holiness and righteousness. He that hath God in his eye, observing him as one that will bring him to an account for his nature, talents, and all his waies, O how will the strength of this bear down the strength of corruption!

The love of the nature of the things themselves is much more forcible. The fear of God hath a mighty outward force, an overbearing force: but love to the things themselves carrieth a natural inclination with it. Hee moves sweetly, kindly, naturally, who moves toward a thing through love to it.

But *the love of God*, or *love to God* is much more powerful then this: for as it is greater then any of these things, so it draweth much more forcibly. This love begun bringeth into a more perfect state; This love perfected bringeth into full perfection.

3. Wisdom teacheth to do things by sutable light. *The wise man hath his eyes in his head, but the fool walketh in darknes*. The fool is still ready to think that he is in his way, and shall without doubt come to his end, but the wise man loves to see it. He knows the light of the Lord can only lead to the Lord, and that light he pants after. All true light (in every kind) is the light of the

Lord, and therefore he embraceth it: but yet there is one kind above the rest, which is more certain, more comprehensive, &c. That is it which he looks after; which when he wants, he knoweth not how to walk. The fool is confident in his own understanding; but he that is wise dareth not to trust it, but desireth the light and guidance of the Lord: and when he wants that, hee knoweth not which way to move. O how he listens and hearkens after his instruction, which fools despise, *Prov. 1. 7.* All his hope is in the good will and pleasure of the Lord. He sees, he feels his own weakness, to him alone doth he look up to strengthen him, and to work all in him. *Lord I beleeve, help my unbelief.*

Now this wisdom is so full of fear, that ye may read fear written all along in it: and indeed it is a most excellent strain and spirit of wisdom, which the fear of the Lord teacheth.

And the know'edg of the holy is Understanding.

Knowledg with man is accounted *understanding*: and indeed not without cause; for it carrieth with it not only an appearance, but a reality in its own nature and kind.

But yet all that which goes with man for knowledg, passeth away as a shadow before that which is more substantial.

The effects of the knowledg of man are but weak and empty. They only fill up a room here in this vain world, but have no place among the substance of things. All the knowledg of man is but the knowledg of an unclean vessel: nay it wanteth the true root and nature of understanding.

But now, That knowledg which is effectually practical, That knowledg which hath a clean root, That knowledg which purifieth and keepeth the vessel pure, causing continual streams of purity to flow forth from

it;

it; That knowledg is understanding, that knowledg is knowledg indeed. It hath substance in it, whereas the other is only a vain appearance, glittering for a while as if it were somewhat, but before that which can discern it, is not. *The fear of Adonai this is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* Vain man thinks that none but fools fear God, and that it is ignorance which maketh men so nice and shie in their steps and motions: But true fear of God, and true shieness of sin ariseth from a true light, and is true knowledg and understanding in whomsoever it is.

The true way of sight, and the things
most desireable to be seen.

EPHES. 1. 17. 18. 19.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation, in the knowledg of him:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that yee may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who beleeve, according to the working of his mighty power.

THere is a difference between *Wisdom, Revelation* and *Knowledg*, as their several natures discover.

Knowledg is that impressi^on of things, which they

leave in the understanding. Things being let into the understanding (by the eye of the understanding) leave an impression there, which impression is called *knowledge*. The sense of this is called *acknowledgment*, which is the reflection of sight of a mans knowledge: for man many times doth not know that he knoweth. Man sometimes may not be able to read that print, or that which is printed in his own understanding.

Wisdom is a skil in the mind to make use of what is in the understanding: It is a skil to search after, improve and manage knowledge. A fool may know many things, but he is wise who knoweth how to use things. The foolish Heathen attained to the knowledge of God, but they were not wise to glorify him as God, Rom. 1. And so concerning the Jews, saith hee, *O that they were wise to consider their latter end.* They had the knowledge of it, and could acknowledge it; but they wanted wisdom to consider it, and to make use of it aright.

Revelation is the opening, the unvailing, the discovering of things to the understanding. When the understanding, by the light in it-self, and by the light in and about things, cometh to see them, This is Revelation. It is that discovery of things to the understanding from whence the impression floweth.

The Spirit of Wisdom, and the Spirit of Revelation.

All life lieth in a kind of spirit, and the difference of life is according to the difference of spirits. *Wisdom and Revelation, &c.* are but forms, but shapes, but dead sapless things, further then there is a spirit in them. As there is a spirit in things of this world, which maketh them fresh and lively, without which they are of no value: So it is also in inward things (in things of the inward world). There is no life in knowledge, in wisdom or any thing else that belongeth to the mind, further then there is a spirit in them.

There

There is a spirituous part in things, and there is a spirit in man to guid and manage that spirituous part: There is a spirituous part in ordinary wisdom and knowledg, and there is a spirit in man which knoweth how to drink it in. So it is in spiritual wisdom and in spiritual revelation. There is a spirit in the spirit (as I may say) which drinketh in these, and which groweth by these. God promised to Christ *the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of council and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord*, Isa. 11. 2. There is a Spirit in Christ and in every spiritual man (given unto them by God), whereby he can receive in, bring forth, use and manage that wisdom knowledg and revelation (or any thing else) which God bestoweth on him. Precepts of wisdom, or discovery of things above the strength of this spirit, do but overbear: But if mans spirit bee strenghtened within to digest what is discovered to him, he will grow apace. He that hath *a spirit of revelation* will grow exceedingly in the knowledg of things: He that hath *a Spirit of Wisdom* will grow exceedingly in the skill to make use of things.

It is in the spiritual nature, as in this ordinary nature. As the Spirit of God doth not immediately act in man, putting forth wisdom and giving out revelations according to his own ability, but according to the growth and strength of that spirit which he hath placed in man: So is it in this nature, God puteth forth this spiritual Wisdom, and giveth out spiritual discoveries of things, according to the growth and strength of this spirit in the new man.

In the knowledg of him. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledg of him.

There is a knowledg of things without an understanding spirit, without wisdom to use them; nay there is

a knowledg of things without the true discovery of them: and such is most mens knowledg, both in natural and spiritual things. Men know things after a sort; but not from a true, not from a thorow discovery: So that in seeing they do not see, and in knowing they do not know. The knowledg either of Heaven above, or of the earth beneath, or of the things which are either in Heaven or upon the earth, (so far as it is now had) is a very shallow knowledg. We do not discern them in knowing of them. Indeed we rather think we know them, then know them. Much more is it so in spiritual things: In the midst of our knowledg of God, how little do we know God! in the midst of our knowledg of Christ, how little do we know Christ! In the midst of our knowledg of spiritual excellencies, motions, priviledges, dangers, &c. how far are we from any true understanding of their nature! We take up apprehensions about these things from the Scriptures, but the nature of them is not discovered to us, no not in those Scriptures from which we take up our apprehensions.

That is an excellent kind of knowledg, which containeth the true understanding and sight of the thing in it, yea the very spirit of wisdom and revelation: when we do not take in an apprehension or imagination concerning God, but see him in truth, and know what to do with this sight: When we see his true image the redeemer, his anointed Saviour: When we see the very death, resurrection, ascension and intercession, &c. of this Saviour. He flourisheth in knowledg, whom the Lord blesseth with this gift.

For indeed, this is the gift of God. This spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledg of Christ, is only given by God to whom he judgeth meet. As life, as the understanding it self, was the gift of God at first: So is every degree of life, every growth of the understanding,

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standing, every discovery unto the understanding, the gift of God likewise. Every thing that is learned even in nature, God teacheth: All the wisdom that men make use of in their very common actions, they had from him: Man could not have learned so much as to plow, if God hath not taught him, Isa. 28. 26. So also in spiritual things; Spiritual wisdom, spiritual understanding, the spiritual discovery of things, *the spirit of wisdom and revelation*, is the gift of God. As God doth not give to every natural man the spirit of natural wisdom and understanding: No more doth he give to every spiritual man the spirit of spiritual wisdom and revelation, but only to whom, and when, and as far as he pleaseth. Therefore the Apostle prayeth God (who is the God of Christ, and the Father of every glorious nature and operation) to bestow this upon them; *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him.*

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that yee may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.

Here are three things or sights beheld by the enlightened eye, which do not only steer it, but also make it exceeding vigorous in its spiritual motions, life, and joy, which are these. First, *what God will be to it?* Secondly, *what it shall be to God?* Thirdly, *what a wonderful power that is which is engaged for it*, both to carry it onto this, and also to keep it safe until it hath brought

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it unto the full possession thereof? Whereunto may be added a fourth, viz. *the means whereby this comes to be known*, or discerned by any, which is by Gods letting in light upon their spirits; it is by his anointing the eye which he hath formed in them, and causing it to see in his light. *The eyes of your understanding being enlig'tened: that ye may know, &c.*

1. The first of these is, *What God will be to his whom he hath called in Christ*, which is held forth in this Phrase, *that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.* Man is a wanderer from his God, until he please to give him a call to the center and fountain of his own life. Mans condition is desperate and altogether without hope, till God please to turn the scale of it, by calling man out of it. Mans condition is dark, he knoweth not any thing at all, (I mean) not any thing in this line of knowledge. But when God once pleaseth to look out of his holy habitation upon man, letting forth his own sweet spirit to new-form him, and to call him out of this corrupt nature and state, there is a beginning of a present, and a foundation of a further growth of life, hope, and knowledge for the future: *That ye may know what is the hope of his calling.*

The call of God, is that touch of his spirit upon our spirits, whereby he turneth us toward himself, whereby he winds us out of the world and out of our selves unto himself, whereby he fetcheth us out of Satans Kingdom into his own Kingdom. God who brought us out of nothing into this world (come forth, said he, to every thing, and it was) raiseth us out of a condition worse then nothing into a better world. He giveth our spirits but a call, and presently we are here no more, but immediately with him.

In this call there are four steps or degrees. First, *The discovery of our present estate*, which man never knoweth effectually

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effectually till the time of his call. (It is the light of God alone which truly maketh darkness manifest.) It is impossible to see that which light alone discovers, without light. Secondly, *the discovery of another state*, a different estate, a contrary estate. Thirdly, there is (which necessarily floweth from the former) *a kindling of a desire in the soul after a change*. And then lastly, *there is an effectual invitation of the soul out of the one into the other*. There is such an invitation as leaves no room for reluctancy or dispute, but forcibly carries the soul with it. And surely the soul standeth not in need of much invitation, who is thus prepared a fore-hand.

1. There is in this call *a discovery unto the soul of its present estate*. That estate of death, of darkness, of slavery of misery wherein it is, is by this opened and made manifest to the soul. God shining with his light about it, sheweth it what a condition it is in, which it never dreamed of, nor could not possibly have discerned, unless this light had shined about it.

It sheweth it *its death in sin*, Eph. 2. 1. *And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins*. This death is a death of the earthly image, That image of God, which was planted in man in righteousness and holiness, is slain and lieth dead in him. The man is lost, the excellency of his life is perished, he is dead, he is not. But yet this death is not altogether without life, it is only without the kind of life which is slain in it, but in stead thereof it hath another kind of life, namely a life in and to corruption. The Devil who hath slain Gods image in man, hath quickened his own there, making man alive unto sin, as is expressed vers. 2. *In which in time past ye walked after the life of this world, after the Prince of the power of the aire, the spirit that now worketh in the disobedients*. And so vers. 3. *Ther's a walking, a conversation in sin*, a fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the

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mind: yea and a powerfull spirit dwelling and working mightily in this spirit, which is thus alive unto sin.

It sheweth it *its darknes through sin*. It is utterly dark, void of all light. It hath no capacity of seeing, its eye is quite out. Not but that it hath an eye and a light in its own way (for as its death doth not exclude, but imply a contrary life, so doth its darknes also imply a contrary light.) Man hath an exceeding quick eye and a very full light, but it is only in his own way, it is only in sin and unto sin. But unto the true spiritual knowledg and worship of God (yea to that which is truly and purely natural) he is quite blind. He is an enemy to al righte-ousnes and holines, to al such as hath the true natural image and stamp of God upon it. It is not only the divinity of Christ, but his very humanity also is ever persecuted by the blind, dark, corrupt, spirit of man and Satan.

It sheweth its *its slavery*. Man is a slave to sin, cannot but sin, cannot but serve sin, cannot but yeeld his members as members of unrighteousnes unto sin. Not but that man doth this freely: He doth not see that hee is a slave, hee did not feel that hee is a slave, he is at liberty, he hath the freedom of his wil. He hath indeed the freedom of his corrupt wil, but the wil of his nature is enslaved. He were not so great a slave as he is, were he not in this sence free. He is free from righteousnes, free from holines, and free unto sin and wickednes. But who will not readily acknowledge that this freedom must needs be far from true freedom? His liberty is like to his life in sin. As the life in sin is not true life, only an appearing life, but death in truth: So the liberty of sin, is not true liberty, but slavery. It is not a right enlargement of our nature, but a fruit of the enslaving of our nature. All the freedom which man hath in sin is not a true freedom, but ariseth from the darknes and blindness of his mind. Because he seeth not
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any thing aright, but misse-seeth every thing, therefore is he thus blind. One beam of light would interrupt all his freedom, and make him see and know himself to be a slave.

Lastly it sheweth it *its misery*. This seeming life, as it is death in its own nature, so it will lead to real death. Condemnation must pass upon every motion of this life, and wrath follow condemnation. *Tribulation and anguish* will overtake and light upon every soul that doth evil. The sinner, the malefactor must come before the Judge, and alas he cannot possibly abide his presence, his law, his light, his sentence. This is a terrible judgment indeed: Is not this misery to purpose, to lye open without any shelter to so righteous and universal a destruction? This is the state of the soul, the light of God maketh these things very manifest: yea the conscience it self being a little opened by the light of God, doth easily discover these things, and represent the reality of them to the soul. This is the first thing in the call of God, *the discovery unto the soul of its present estate*.

2. The second thing in this call is, *The discovery of a contrary estate*. An estate of life, true life; An estate of light, true light; An estate of liberty, true liberty; An estate of justification and happiness, true happiness; A way of redemption from all this death, darkness, slavery and misery, and an estate into that which hath in it a contrary excellency unto it all. Sin shall be done away, the soul shall be made free from it: There is a mighty Saviour which hath a salvation to dispense, which will set at liberty from all these.

O how evident this life, this liberty, this happiness is made appear to the soul, when this light shineth about him. He then seeth it to be the truth. The life which Adam had, was indeed a life, in respect of that estate wherein he was: But this life excelleth, This life is of another

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another nature. The liberty which *Adam* had, was true liberty in its own kind: But this is a liberty of a far more excellency kind. The happiness which *Adam* had, was happiness also, according to the make and capacity of man: But yet this as far exceedeth it, as Heaven doth earth. All these things the soul seeth evidently at this time: for in the call of God there is a light shining, which sheweth the things whereunto he calleth, and the excellency of them.

3. *There is the kindling of a desire in the soul to change estates.* When God calls, there is a vertue going from him into the soul, which kindles a desire in the soul, answerable to the nature of the things discovered by God in his call. The soul hearing the news of so sweet, so excellent, so adequate a salvation, it presently pants and longs after it. It now finds a vehemency of desire in it to be changing of Masters and conditions. It would fain be translated from Satan to God, and from the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light. It hungers and thirsts immeasurably after Christ, his righteousness, his salvation, his freedom, &c. To be under his yoke, to enter into the sweet life, nature and power of his spirit. This is so kindled by this call of God, that the soul hath no rest, but is wholly swallowed up with this desire.

4. *There is an invitation to this soul to come forth out of the one estate into the other.* The minister saith *Come*, The word it self saith *Come*, The spirit also saith *Come*. *Come unto me thou weary and heavy laden soul saith Christ, and I will give thee rest. Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. He that is athirst, let him come and drink of the water of life freely.*

Now in this call, besides these things which may be taken notice of, there are many things done secretly and invisibly even to their own spirits (many times) in whom

whom they are wrought. Here is *Christ* shewen, here is *repentance* given, *faith* given, Here is the man new-made, Christ given to him, he receiving Christ, such a knot knit between them as can never be dissolved again. Here is the seed of the Kingdom sown in the heart, which in its weakness doth not know what it is, nor what it does, nor whither it tends: It doth not know either its own beginning and being, or its own growth, or its end: but he that soweth it, knoweth all this. Yet afterward when the soul is grown up, it may come to remember this call, and know what it was, and understand the sweetness of it.

That ye may know what is the hope of his calling.

The call of God administers great hope to the called by him. God putteth those poor affrighted souls into hope, who hearken to his call. God maketh great and rich promises to them whom he inviteth unto his Kingdom, the expectation of the accomplishment whereof is their hope. There are two main heads of this hope mentioned, *Act. 26. 18.* to which the many particulars may be referred, which are these, *Forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified.* The first and main thing which they hope for, is the blotting out of their sins, the perfect blotting out of their sins, from whence peace with God and all manner both of outward, and of spiritual good also, doth ensue. All under God fall in in the same peace, and all enemies to God loose their hold. *Death, darkness, slavery, misery* (of all kinds) yea, all that comes by sin vanisheth. Where is the accuser, where is the condemner, when sin is gone? The call of God giveth perfect ground of hope in this thing, namely, that their sins shall be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come. O how sweet is this hope! When the judgment shall be set, and all others cast by it, they shall be freed. When others hang down their heads, falling under

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under the weight of wrath and condemnation, they shall lift up their heads, they shall stand in judgment. Secondly, they shall have *an inheritance among the Saints*. What God hath treasured up to manifest the riches of his greatness and goodness to his own holy off-spring, they shall fully partake. They shall share the inheritance of God with the Saints. They shall have the life of God, the Spirit of God, the Wisdom of God, the Love of God, the Power of God, yea all the Excellencies of God to fill them, to dwell with them, to abide with them for ever. What ever their hearts can desire to be rid of, they shall be rid of: what ever their hearts can desire to enjoy, they shall have to the full, yea far beyond. Here they are dog'd with sins and corruptions, weaknesses and temptations; but all these shall then be blown away. Here they can never meet with holiness enough, with enough of the presence of God, with enough of the love, wisdom, power of God, &c. but then they shall have it all. Behold this, this is the hope of their calling.

Now to know what this is, the knowing of what this hope is, implieth partly the taking of it into the senses, and the further contemplating and comprehending of it in the understanding. It denotes the souls seeing, its feeling, its tasting, its touching this hope: and it includes also the comprehension of the heart, which is an intelligent collection from the verdict of the senses, with a further improvement according to the nature and strength of the spirit. By the experience of what they have already felt of the pardon of sin, and of what they have already tasted of God (together with the further opening of their spirit, and of these things to their spirit) they come in part to understand the wonderful nature and great extent of this hope. This is the first thing, namely, what God will be to it.

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2. The second thing is, *What it shall be to God?* what God hath sown of himself in his, besides that of himself which he will give unto them: which is held out in this phrase, *and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.* They shall be his inheritance, his portion, that which he will possess and enjoy as his own for ever, They shall not only have God, but they shall be fit to receive him: They shall not only be given unto him, but they shall be a fit gift for him. They shall be such a spouse, as is every way fit for himself to desire, possess and delight in. That which he will inherit in the Saints is very rich, glorious, full, and every way worthy of him.

His inheritance. God hath an inheritance due unto him. He is kept out of his right, as well as his people. He is not yet come to rest, no more then they: but as they are seeking after their inheritance, so is he after his.

In the Saints. This inheritance of his is feared in the Saints. He will dwell no where, but in that house which he prepareth for himself. *The Lords portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.* Those whom he redeemeth, sanctifieth and buildeth up for himself, in those doth he delight to dwell. The people of God esteem all but dross and dung besides him, and he esteemeth all but dross and dung besides them. All else is but chaff, offall, stubble; They are his corn, his jewels, his substance. As he is the pearl for which they sell all: so they are the pearl for which he gives all.

The glory of his inheritance. This is not a mean inheritance, such an one as he is fain to rest contented with for want of a better: but a glorious inheritance. His spouse is truly beautiful. She is not only beautiful because she is his spouse, but such is her beauty, that she deserveth love for her self: She is so beautiful, that God could not in justice but love her, though she were not his spouse.

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Then shall the King greatly desire thy beauty. God pitcheth his love upon her in a most unlovely condition, or thus: God acts one great strain of love toward her, when she is in the most unlovely hue that can be: But before God hath done with her, he maketh her as lovely as the can desire to be, nay as he himself can desire to have her. *He layeth her foundations with Saphirs, and all her gates are of precious stones:* The light in her, the life in her, her love to her husband, her chastity, her beauty, &c. all are glorious. God hath provided well for himself as well as for his; He could have sped so wel no where else. Hee could not have pleased himself better, nay not so wel again.

The riches of the glory. It is not only glorious (it doth not only shine and make a brave shew) but it is rich too, richly glorious. Every stone in this building is very costly. There is the life of God (the fresh vigorous life of God) the pure light of God, the holy nature of God in every part of this Fabrick. Every stone is truly living; every stone hath pure and perfect life (even eternal life) in it. God hath laid out all his estate, all his own riches, all his own fulness upon this building. He cannot be blamed for dwelling here, or for setting up his hearts rest here, for how can he go higher? For here he hath spent all: all his wisdom, and all his goodness; all his power, and all his love, and what ever else is in him. He hath as it were sown it here, that so it might grow up for him, and he reap it again: in so much that all his own happiness and content lieth in this crop.

This is an exceeding delightful sight to a spiritual eye, and to a spiritual heart, to consider and behold that it shall not only enjoy God, it shall not only be enjoyed by God: but it shall be fit both to enjoy him, and to be enjoyed by him. It shall complain no more of its own unworthiness, for it shall see it self worthy even of God. It shall complain

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plain no more of the emptiness and shame of its nature, for it shall see it self filled with the riches and glory of God, and thereby fitted for God. It shall be the richly glorious inheritance of God, which is the second thing, namely, *what it shall be to God?*

3. The third thing is, *what a wonderful power* that is, which God hath engaged to secure and carry on the work in his people by: *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who beleeve, according to the working of his mighty power.*

Gods people have a great way to go, a great many enemies inares and temptations to encounter with, a great many things to be wrought in them, a great many things to be done by them, &c. They them selves being very weak, how shall all these be effected? Why God hath power enough for them. He who hath begun in them by such a power as nothing can stand before, will go on and perfect his work by the same power. *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power, &c.*

It is power, and the power of God which is here spoken of: and alas what are all other powers to his power! *All spirits are but as flesh before him: The nations, they are but as the drop of a bucket: The very Angels themselves are but his ministring spirits; They have but his ministring power, and only so much of it too, as he pleaseth to dis- pense unto them. Every thing hath power suitable to its kind, suitable to its nature: but nothing hath this kind of power but himself.*

Greatness of his power. It is not only power, not only the power of God which is here spoken of, but the great power of God. It is the might or strength of his power. He hath not only engaged the strength of his fingers ends, but the strength of his arm, yea the very strength of his heart. He gathereth together his power, and he stretcheth it out in the behalf of them that beleeve.

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The exceeding greatneſs of his power. This power is not only great, but very great, wonderful great, exceeding great. There is no comprehending, no not ſo much as imagining how great this power is. He that hath a ſpiritual eye may ſee that it is exceeding great, but he cannot ſee how exceeding great. This object is too large to enter fully even into a ſpiritual underſtanding.

There are in Creatures ſeveral kinds and degrees of power, which they have beſtowed upon them to make uſe of ſeveral waies, as their condition and need requirerh. All motions and actions do not require power, many are done with a ſleight: Some indeed do require ſeveral degrees of ſtrength: but it is not ordinary to put forth the whole ſtrength. Thus it is alſo with God. God doth moſt things with a ſleight, yet it pleaſeth him to have ſome what to exerciſe his ſtrength, yea his utmoſt ſtrength upon: and that he hath reſerved for this work, viz. for the redemption of his ſpouſe.

There is an inſtance given, in the next verſe, what kind of power this is, even that very power which he wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand. This by the very ſound of it wil appear to be a very great act of power, an exceeding mighty operation of an exceeding mighty power. To take Chriſt from the loweſt ſtep, from the loweſt ebb, and liſt him to the greateſt height, to put ſuch a ſpirit in him as ſhould work him out of the bowels of death and the grave, into the heart and throne of eternal life, this was a ſtupendious power indeed! It is not to be conceived under what powers of death Chriſt lay, when this power entered into him and wrought in him. Indeed this work was not only the greateſt in it ſelf, but there were alſo multitudes of mighty enemies ſtood in the way to hinder it. All other powers ſet themſelves in direct oppoſition againſt this work, which together with the nature

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nature of the thing, made it as difficult as it was possible for a thing to be. When God made the World, he had nothing to hinder him, he needed but use the ordinary strength of his nature, and the work was done: But when he would raise Christ, he had al powers against him, al the powers of earth, death, hel, &c. and he must put such a spirit in him, as should be able to break through and overcome them al, or he had been held in captivity by them. Therefore this required a mighty strength.

To us-ward who beleeeve, according to the working of his mighty power, &c.

This power of this very nature, this great power, this exceeding great power, which hath such a mighty and wonderful way of operation, is engaged to beleeevers, is to carry on the work of life and salvation in beleeevers. This is to-begin, this is to carry on, and this is to-perfect the work in them. So that if there be any thing to be done for them or in them, which that mighty power (which nothing is able to withstand, and which hath already dashed in peeces al other powers) cannot effect, then the work may miscarry: Then their own corrupt hearts may be too strong or too hard for them. But if that power can defend them, they shal be safe. If that power can raise them, they shal be raised: If that power can exalt them, they shal be exalted. If that power can subject al their enemies under them, they shal be laid under their feet. As it hath already done al these things for Christ (ver. 20. 21. 22.) So wil it also (by the same spirit, and according to the same way of operation) do the same things for them. And this is the third thing.

4. And lastly, Here is the means whereby al this cometh to be known, which is by Gods opening of the new-made eye (of the eye which he hath bestowed on beleeevers) in his light upon these objects. *The eyes of*

your understanding being enlightened : that ye may know what is the hope, &c.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

In the soul as well as in the body, there is an head and an heart: And what ever is in this old creation (either in soul or body) is also in the new creation more spiritually and more fully. The spiritual man hath his head and his heart, which are in him the fountain of his spiritual life sence and motion, as they are in the other of their natural. And in him the head and the heart (as well as in the ordinary nature) have an influence one upon another: What lies in the heart fumeth up into the head, and what lies into the head sinks down into the heart: What the heart desires or eschewes, the head wil presently apprehend and interpret to be good or evil; and what the head esteemes good or evil, the heart wil presently desire or eschew.

As both these are out of order, mis-shapen, mis-seasoned in the old man: So in the new-man they are new-made, new-formed, new-seasoned. And so long and so far as these are kept pure, so long and so far the man is safe and in a thriving condition, otherwise he declineth. And so far as the enemy can convey any of his dark principles into either of these (either into his head or into his heart;) so far he regaineth possession of him again. The light of God, the life of God, God wrappeth up in principles, in spiritual principles which he soweth in his earth: These principles where they come, expel darkness. But so far as this light waxeth dim or goeth out, the principles of darkness recover themselves and take place again.

There is a continual fight in the natural man, because the natural light in him (*viz.* his reason) is not cleer, but mixt with darkness: And there is a continual fight in the ~~spiritual~~ man, because his spiritual light is not cleer
neither

neither, but mixed with dark principles. They be not al thrown out at first (for when God first soweth his seeds of light, he doth not immediately expel al the seeds of darkness:) and more are sown afresh afterward. For so soon as ever God hath sown his seed, the envious man watcheth his next opportunity to sow his tares.

The envious man covereth his seed with the shape of light (for as he transformeth himself, so doth he also his seed) that it may be the better entertained by us: (For as God doth not, so the devil cannot sow in us against our wil. Yet as God hath a power to create a wil in us; so the devil hath a very strange power over our wil to, which how far it reaches is very difficult for us to know.) Which lieth stil and discovereth not it self, until it be grown up and come to bear fruit. We please our selves very much, thinking we have abundance of the true light, abundance of the true life sown in us: Ah poor foolish creatures ! We were not able to distinguish the seed; and when it cometh to bear fruit, we shal see how we are mistaken. In stead of the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love, meekness, true zeal, &c. We shal find the spirit of Antichrist, the spirit of flesh, the spirit of self, the spirit of the devil plainly manifesting it self to every spiritual eye, and to our own too if it be opened.

Now so far as these seeds are sown, so far as the soul is allured or prevailed upon to drink in these, as if they were what they are represented to be, *viz.* the light of God, the life of God, &c. So far is fresh corruption and misery (which alwaies groweth with it) entertained; which suddenly taketh root groweth and flourisheth, things al this while going on sweetly, til the fruit cometh to be seen and tasted: but then it wil soon discover its bitterness and unfavorinels, to the palates both of God and man. *Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and their*
grapes

~~grapes the grapes of Gomorrah.~~ O what sowre harsh fruit springeth up in the garden of God ! My soul is sick with tasting it. I know not how to bear the relish of it, but wish (with al my heart) it were thrown into the fire and burnt up.

And as the reason of man being corrupted with dark principles, causeth him to love darkness : If dark principles of tyranny and slavery be sown in him, he wil commend tyranny and slavery, desire it, strive after it (though not under that very name) think il of those that differ from him, and strive against them even to death : O how much blood, hath this kind of darkness in the mind of man, cost this nation ! So likewise if the spirit or inward mind of a man be corrupted, he will think the devils tiranny (and his own slavery thereby) to be freedom, and desire both to be inclined unto and to have his scope in that, which is evidently vile and miserable, to the sight of every eye that is not blinded with him, by the same principles of darkness and corruption.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

Every spiritual man hath an understanding of his own, whereby alone he can truly understand. As every natural man hath a natural understanding of his own : So hath every spiritual man also. Every creature hath its own head, its own heart, its own eye, its own ear, its own mouth, its own stomach, &c. and so it is in al the rest of the parts and faculties both of body and mind. One may be helpful to another to understand, but both the faculty and act of understanding must be their own.

The eyes of your understanding.

In the head there is an eye. The senses are in the head. The spiritual understanding is the spiritual head, and in it is the spiritual eye.

There is a mystical or spiritually political head, according to the kind of spiritual or mystical policy. So in the great

great body of Saints Christ is the head, and every particular member hath that particular place, office and duty in the body, to which it is assigned, and for which it is fitted. In smaller bodies (as particular Churches) there is also head and members, according as they are proportioned by the spirit of Christ to that state.

But besides this there is also to make up every new man a distinct head body and members of his own. It is so in nature; The natural man hath his own head parts and members, besides that place in civil societies whereof he may be either head or member: yea he may be both head and member, Head in one society member in another.

Now in every head (or understanding) there is a ear to hear, a nose to smell, a palate to taste, a tongue to speak, and an eye to see. The head doth not see of it self; but by the help of that organ which is fitted thereunto, the eye.

The eyes. There is not only an eye, but eyes in the head: yet these eyes, though two, are but one, one single eye. The more inwardly we come, the more truly shall we find variety, and in that variety unity. He only sees one, who sees all: and he only sees all, who sees but one. He alone knoweth man, who knoweth the woman distinct from man: and he alone knoweth the woman distinct from man, who knoweth the woman one with man. He knoweth them both, who knoweth them both one, and yet distinct in one another.

Being enlightened. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

To every thing life is necessary: A dead eye cannot see, a dead head cannot understand, a dead heart cannot consider. But besides life, light also is necessary to the eye that seeth. The eye must be enlightened, if the eye see. It is not enough to have a living eye, but there must

be light also put into the eye. The scales must be taken off, and the eye opened ere it can see: and yet at this will not serve, but the eye must also be enlightened: it must be anointed, *anoint thine eyes with oil, saith the Lord, that thou mayest see.* In this anointing, in this eye-salve of God there is light: which entering into the eye causeth it to see. The eye is the light of the body, but what is that in the eye which is the light thereof?

There must be both light about the object, and light also in the eye, or there can be no sight. He that hath a spiritual eye (with spiritual light therein) yet cannot see, unless there be light also about the spiritual things which he applieth himself to see: And again, Although there be never so much light about spiritual things, yet if there be not light in the eye, there is no discerning of them. We blame men for not holding our things clearly to us (clearly to the eye of our reason, or clearly to the eye of our spirits:) but we are seldom sensible enough of the defect of our own eyes. Again, we are apt to blame men for not understanding us, in what of God we pretend to hold forth; but we consider not sufficiently the defect in their eye: Which if we did, we should be less offended at their not understanding nor embracing what we desire, and in stead thereof pray hard to him in whose power alone it is, to open their eyes and let in his light into them.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know, &c.

The eye, being enlightened, it seeth what ever spiritual thing is presented to it, if there be sufficient light about that thing. It seeth truth in any kind, truly and clearly manifested. Open the nature of God, open the nature of sin, open the nature of the heart, open any spiritual thing, any spiritual happiness, any spiritual misery, any spiritual danger, any spiritual safety or relief, &c.

it seeth these presently with satisfaction: so that it cannot but assent to them and acknowledge them: while its eye is opened with the light remaining in it, and while the things are represented with the light remaining about them.

It seeth plainly what condition it was in when it was called by God: It knoweth the evil of it, the danger of it, the misery of it. It seeth both that it was, and daily is further and further called and removed out of it. It seeth whether this call doth tend, and so is fed with a mighty hope and expectation concerning the end of these things. It seeth what a rich inheritance it shall be to God, how glorious God will make it for his own possession and habitation; as well as how abundantly he will fill it with himself. It seeth what mighty power God did, and daily doth and will put forth, until he hath finished this good work which he hath begun.

And oh of what wonderful efficacy is the sight of these things! how vigorously with it carry a man above the world, above all fears, temptations and dangers! What need he care what befalleth him, who certainly knoweth that he shall be safe at last; as happy as himself can wish, yea far beyond: and that all that is cross to him now, shall tend but to bring him with most advantage thereunto?

This the spiritual man, who hath light in the eyes, seeth: but the very same man, if his eyes be closed or the light withdrawn, if the light be taken from these things or from his eyes, he cannot for his heart see them. He may strive after them, and desire to see them, and be exceeding sick for want of the sight of them: but can never obtain it again, but upon the same terms. And yet this mans condition may be safe, even in the midst of his greatest sickness and distress.

But miserable is that man who hath a false light in his eye, who hath a false anointing, a false eye-salve,

whose light in him is darknes. As it is in nature, If a man have false principles, mis-apprehending what his right liberty and safety is, he must needs desire and pursue after a wrong thing; and the more he attaineth of it, the more miserable doth he stil grow, becoming but so much the more foolish slave: So it is in the spiritual estate; If a mans light be wrong, it leadeth him in a false way, through a false holineis (which may be accompanied with a present false rest peace and content) to a false happiness: And notwithstanding all his false hopes, joy, and inward content in his expectation of life, salvation, and blessedness, (which others may miss of but he is sure to obtain, as he saw so cleerly and satisfactorily by his false light) he must come at length to *lye down in sorrow.*

THE

T H E
C L E E R L I G H T
and Sight of G O D.

P S A L M 139. 12.

*Tea the darknes darkeneth not from thee, but the night
shineth as the day: the darknes and the light are both a-
like to thee.*

W*hither shall I go from thy spirit, ver. 7. There
is no shunning the Spirit of the Lord, the
searching Spirit of the Lord. As there is no
searching of him: so there is no avoiding of
being searched by him. There is no going to
the Spirit of the Lord, nor is there any going from the
Spirit of the Lord. Man cannot for his heart approach
to God, nor yet can he from his heart get from God.*

*Or whither shall I flee from thy presence. Man would fain
be hid from God. Man would be content either to get
into the presence, or out of the presence his own way:
but it is impossible for him to do either. There are two
great miseries which attend man in their seasons, the one
is to be pursued by the presence of the Lord, and the
other is to be thrust out of the presence of the Lord.
Man would fain be in the presence of the Lord; but so*

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as he desires, he cannot: Man would fain get out of the presence of the Lord; but he is not able to do so neither. Man would fain be searching the Spirit of the Lord, but his spirit cannot do it: Man would fain avoid the being searched by the Spirit of the Lord, but his spirit cannot do that neither; but where ever he is, there is the Lord with him, trying and searching him, though not alwaies discovering him. And if the eye of man were but open, he would see the Lord continually about him; and his heart would be amazed to see what work he maketh with him. *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-riſing, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my waies. For there is not a word in my tongue, but is, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before,* (thou knowest me throughout, forward and backward, in my whole being, nature, and motions, I am begirt, I am surrounded with thy council and understanding) *and laid thine hand upon me.* The heart of God comprehendeth every thing; and the hand of God is upon every thing, through all varieties of time, from first to last. *O strange kind of comprehension!* *O strange kind of knowledge!* *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.* I have no such kind of knowledge, nor do I know how to come by any such kind of knowledge: it is high; I cannot attain unto it. It is of a deeper interſer nature, then I am capable of comprehending in this state wherein I now am. If it were held out to me, I could not receive it: it is too wonderful for me; it is no way proportioned to my present make and state of being.

If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Hel, behold thou art there. There is no height nor depth whatsoever which thou art not in. It is much disputed

ted

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ted whether there be a local Heaven or a local Hel or no, which I shal not discuss, but I will freely confess that these three things are cleer to me.

1. That God was able to make a local Heaven and a local Hel, as well as a local Earth. (and there is a spiritual Earth, as well as either a Spiritual Heaven or Hell.)

2. That God may have his use of a local Heaven and a local Hel, as well as of a local Earth.

3. That these spirits of ours, whether in or out of these bodies, may be contained as well in a local Heaven or Hel, as in a local earth. But whether Heaven or Hel be places for soul and body, or conditions wherein both are to be hereafter (according to their nature, estate and progress here in this world) the Lord knoweth, but for my part I take not upon me to determine: but most sure I am, that the confidence of flesh in either of these apprehensions may be shaken.

If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. There is no place can hide from a searching eye, supposing light to be there: but darkness is a notable cover: And darkness doth indeed cover both persons and things from our eye; we cannot see what is in the dark. Now because we find it to cover things from our eyes; we are apt to think it may cover from Gods eye: *If I say surely the darkness shall cover me.* There is no elcaping the eye of God either in Heaven, Earth or Hel, but surely darkness will hide from him. *Not even the night will light about me.* If I go to cloath my self in darkness, when God cometh to search me, that very night will be light about me.

Yea the darkness darkeneth not from thee.

The darkness is darkness, and the darkness doth darken: but not from thee. It darkens from the eye of the creature, but not from the uncreated eye. He that made
both

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both the light and the darknes, could not possibly have his own ey-sight depend upon either.

As God made the creature, and the eye of the creature: so he made a light and a darknes, which enlighteneth or darkeneth that eye. So it is in these elementary things (in these terrestrial things:) So it is in the sublimer part of man (There are in his mind, in his reason or understanding, principles of light and principles of darknes, which enlighten or darken:) So it is yet more inwardly in the spiritual man. There is a light or darknes there, by which he may be enlightened or darkened. All these darkneses darken from man, in their severall kinds; but none of them darken from thee: They hide not any person, any thing, any motion, any thought from thee. As none of these lights reveal them to thee, so none of these darkneses hide them from thee.

But the night shineth as the day.

Such is the light of the Lord, Such is the light in the Lord, that it maketh every thing shine round about him. Where ever he is, where ever he looks hee carrieth such light with him, as maketh every thing manifest before him. The presence of the Sun carrieth light with it to us, (That shineth in our eyes) The light of the day manifesteth things to us: but our night is dark. *The night cometh, wherein no man can work:* Man cannot see himself or any else in the dark: He can do no work then. So also the spiritual man is hid from himself, and all spiritual things are hid from him in his night. But it is not so with God, for before him *the night shineth as the day.* So full, so perfect is his light, that it swalloweth up, nay it transformeth darknes. It coloureth darknes with the purity and perfection of its own light. It maketh the very night shine; yea it hath as compleat an influence upon the night

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night, as it would have upon the day. *The night shineth as the day.*

The darknes and the light are both alike to hce.

The sight of God, as it is not helped by any light, so it is not hindered, by any darknes. Light and darknes, how different soever in all other regions, are just alike there. Where the light of God shineth, darknes and light bear no consideration, but are equally swallowed up, by it. Night and day came forth from him, but they are not in the state of his perfection: And when ever the creature is swallowed up into him, it must pass beyond all such things. Not but that God did really make all these things (it was no fiction or bare appearance, but a real creation) yea and still seeth them in their true nature and distinction, more perfectly then wee possibly can: but he doth this, not by the help of our light, but by and in his own. The darknes and the light are both alike to him in this respect, in that they neither hinder nor further him. He seeth not one what the better or the more for the light, nor one whit the less or worse for the darknes. They come neither of them within his line, and so they are neither of them any thing with him. God seeth every thing with his own eye, and by his own light, which swalloweth up all our light; and so swalloweth it up, that it is not the same there with him, as it is here with us. And this is a great advantage God hath over us, He can see us with his eye, Hee can measure us in his light, He knoweth us throughout, His light discovereth us perfectly unto him: But wee cannot see God with our eye, wee cannot discern him by our light, we cannot know him further then hee pleaseth to reveal himself unto us. And that knowledg of himself which hee doth reveal, is but similitudi-

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nary, and consequently but for a season, intended only for present use; Not to last, but to passe away and give place to that which is of a more excellent nature, that which is not only perfect in its kind, but of a perfect kind. God writeth but for the present age, estate, condition and eye of the world; or of his people in the world, which he meaneth to blot out again, when hee openeth his new book, and bringeth forth his new eye in his own light: *For when that which is perfect shall come, then that which is imperfect shall be done away.*

THE

The first tipe of the two Seeds.

GENES. 4. vers. 1. to 13.

And Adam knew Eve his Wife, and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

And she again bare his Brother Abel; and Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And in proceſſe of time it came to paſſe, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the Lord.

And Abel, he alſo brought of the firſtlings of his ſtocks, and of the fat the eoſ: and the Lord had reſpect unto Abel, and to his offerings.

But unto Cain, and to his offerings he had not reſpect: and Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the Lord ſaid unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doe well, ſhalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doeſt not well, ſin lieth at the door: And unto thee ſhall be his deſire, and thou ſhalt rule over him.

And Cain ſpake with Abel his brother: and it came to paſſe when they were in the field, that Cain roſe up againſt Abel his brother, and ſlew him.

And the Lord ſaid unto a n, Where is Abel thy brother?

And he ſaid, I know not; Am I my brothers keeper?

And he ſaid, What haſt thou done? the voice of thy brothers blood crieth unto me, from the ground.

And now art thou curſed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brothers blood from thy hand.

When thou tilleſt the ground, it ſhall not henceforth yeeld unto thee her ſtrength: a fugitive and a vagabond ſhalt thou be in the earth.

IN a parable here is the miſtery of God covered or opened, as he pleaſeth.

Here are the two seeds, neither of them springing immediately from God, but from the broken stock of *Adam* and *Eve*.

The seed of the Serpent or of the wicked one cometh forth first, then the seed of Christ or of the spiritual and holy one, v. 1. 2.

They both learn the worship of God and practise it, ver. 3. 4. The very seed of the Serpent are found great admirers and worshippers of God here in this world. What the *Jews* said to *Moses* (*Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it*, Deut. 5. 27. is the voice of every man: but the Lord knoweth the temper and nature of his heart and spirit, and dealeth with man not according to what man taketh himself to be, but according to what he himself knoweth him to be.

The Lord putteth a difference between these worshippers and their worship, accepting the one, but not the other. The Lord accepteth all the services of the true seed, but he accepteth none of the services of the seed of the Serpent, or of the spirit of man which is now brought forth out of the loins of the Serpent. The root and fruit of the one pleaseth him, but his soul loatheth the root and all the fruit of the other. *And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.*

Quest. But what was the reason that God accepted Abel and his offering, but not Cain and his?

The reason is plain (as it is rendered by the Apostle) because *Abel* and his offering were of a more acceptable nature, of a more excellent kind than *Cain's* was. So saith the Apostle *Ebr. 11. v. 4. by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts:*

gifts: and by it he being dead, yet speaketh. Abel was more righteous then Cain, for his nature was leavened with faith; and his sacrifice was more excellent then Cains, for that was seasoned with faith also. God did not carry himself partially between them, in accepting the one (and testifying that his acceptation, by fire from Heaven as the Jews say) and not the other, but according to the truth and righteousness of his own nature. God himself gives the same reason in his expostulation with Cain (vers. 7. of this chap.) *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? If thy offering were as good as thy brothers, should it not be as acceptable? God is no respecter of persons*, but him who is best, he esteemeth best; and him who doth best, he accepteth best. Abels offering came from a more excellent principle, and it was better managed then Cains.

The services of mans nature and spirit have most commonly all, but alwaies one of these three faults in them.

1. They are defective in their own kind. His sacrifices are for the most part blind, or lame, or some way or other diseased. (Indeed man thinks any thing good enough for God.) *If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.* This is intimated here, in that it is said, *Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof*. Whereas it was only said concerning Cain, that he *brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord*, but it is not said that it was of the best, as is said concerning Abels; As if he took what came next hand, thinking any thing good enough to be burnt. The spiritual man thinks nothing too good to dedicate to the will of the Lord, the natural man thinks everything too much, that is not service-

viceable according to the light of his understanding. Doth God regard sacrifices? *Alas every beast of the forest is his; and the carcel upon a thousand hills; He knoweth all the fowls of the mountains, &c.* But these things he doth; to try and discover how far the creature may be nurtured, and trained up to the Law of his will, and most righteous nature. The Lord by all his dispensations openeth the spirit of man, manifesting how contrary it is to the principle nature, and all the goings forth of his life and spirit.

(Which is the cause of the former). They spring from a same root; from a spirit which is not entire, but wounded in its nature. The spirit of man is not cordial in the service of God; he doth not serve with freedom of spirit, but the Law of his God is a kind of unnatural yoke and bond to him. When he saith; *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us*, he speaks most like himself. *My son, give me thy heart*, saith God, alas he cannot, it being partly broken and maimed, partly prepossessed, and partly placed elsewhere. So that the heart of man is distant from the Lord in all the services which he performeth to him. Let the people of the Lord (such as are so in this kind, as the Jews once were) draw never so nigh to God with their lips, yet their heart is far from him; and cannot be otherwise. What he doth in this kind, is but from force, as is expressed concerning that representative people the Jews, Psal. 78. ver. 34. &c. *When he slew them; then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock: and the high God their redeemer.* Nevertheless, they did but flatter him with their mouth: and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him: neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But yet man hath no sence of this, but thinks (like Cain here) that the Lord doth him wrong

in setting no higher a price upon his performances. *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* Isa. 58. 3. And indeed they did this so frequently, so industriously, with such desire and delight toward God and his waies, that they could not but look upon it as very aimiable. God himself acknowledgeth so much concerning them ver. 2. (and yet is able to maintain the equity of his grounds of excepting against them.) *yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my waies, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinance of justice: they take delight in approaching to God.* What can be said more for man? and yet for all this, how much hath the Lord against him?

3. (Which is the worst of all) They spring from an impure root, from a defiled root, from a rejected root, from a root which the Lord may make use of to serve his holy ends with, but his heart and nature cannot love. They come not only from a weak, a lame, a defective root: but from an unclean root, which can bring forth nothing that is clean (for *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*) and how can the pure heart and eye of the Lord be possibly pleased with that fruit, which is so contrary to his nature, life, and spirit? Let man offer *thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil,* with as entire an heart as he can (let him do his utmost in all fleshly and spiritual exercises of piety:) yet he doth it from his own life, from his own spirit; and so it cannot possibly be accepted, while that is rejected. While the tree is bad, the fruit cannot be good. A sower vine can yeeld but sower grapes. Nay let a man pray for the Spirit of God; that very prayer cannot be acceptable. (I confess it is an excellent kind of fruit, and hath an acceptance according to its kind, and according to its excellency

cellency in its kind: but it not coming from the right root, it is not of the acceptable kind. *By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.* Nay not only whatsoever desire is kindled in man toward God from mans own spirit, but those operations which may be from Gods Spirit upon mans spirit, are not the acceptable thing neither, but only those which flow from the seed of life within, from the root of life within. It is the nature of the child, and the fruit flowing from that nature, which alone the Father knoweth, owneth, and accepteth.

Now the effect of Gods acceptation of the one and rejection in the other, is indignation in the spirit of man. He is offended against this manner of Gods proceeding, and incensed against his favorite. He is offended with God, and offended with his seed, and with their mutual carriages toward each other. so ver. 5, *And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.* The spirit of man, finding himself rejected, and the other nature and spirit accepted, he presently groweth angry at the other. The elder brother is not able to bear the preferring of the younger above him by the Lord. The World, the Serpent and its seed, cannot endure Gods making of Christ his darling.

The effect of this anger is persecution, and that even unto death. *Cain* and *Abel* were but types (but very true types they were) chalking out the path from the beginning to the end. These are the two seeds, here is the nature and course of each represented. Their lives are the same with *Abels* and *Cains*. The nature of faith is the nature of the seed to the end. The life of faith is the life of the seed to the end. The motions and operations of faith will God accept to the end, and for these motions and operations (and the acceptation of them with God) must they be persecuted to the end. It is natural to them

to act by that spirit, and according to that nature which God breatheth into them: and it is as natural to the world to hate and persecute them. The world may be reconciled to their own forms of religion, yea to their own inward faith: but they cannot be reconciled to the true nature and life of faith, or to the seed wherein it lives, but their spirits will be both maligning it, and persecuting of them. It is true, they will be religious, they will be offering to the Lord, but not without killing of *Abel* whom the Lord accepts.

The effect of this persecution is a curse upon themselves, v. 11. 12. *And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brothers blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.* Man increaseth the curse and misery upon himself, by his enmity against, and persecution of the seed of God. That curse which fell upon the earth by the fall of *Adam*, becometh multiplied upon man hereby: God drives him not only out of *Paradise*, but out of the sweetness, ~~happiness~~, and pleasure of the earth, which otherwise he might enjoy, but for his Serpentine enmity against the seed of God. He cannot endure they should have any other life than he, or seem to serve and please God any better, and this unjust and malicious spirit of his, undoes him. The greatest curses, plagues and disturbances of the world, arise from their persecuting the life of Christ. While the *Jews* were this, though but typically, all the plagues did light on the world round about for persecuting them: and all the plagues on themselves, did light upon them for persecuting the true seed among them, whereof that Nation was only the outward tipe, but not the truth it self. (For that people was a double tipe or representation, a representation of the people of God outwardly, and a repre-

sentation of the spirit of man inwardly, according to both which they are to be viewed and considered, both in the transactions of God toward them, and in the things which they themselves acted, and which did befall them.) And whether the great troubles which have been in this nation, did issue hence, or no, the Lord knoweth and wil one day make manifest. The Lord may sow the seed of his own most precious life and nature, in such a weak barren, unlovely peece of earth, as man cannot but despise: and finding him so contemptible in his eyes, how easy is it for him to suffer his spirit to rise and meditate hard things against him? and yet he is not undervalued, but pitied by the Lord because of his present weakness, which the Lord of his own good pleasure hath subjected him unto in hope. Now he that is taken in this snare at present, how can he chuse but engage the Lord against him at present; seeing the very nature of the Lord cannot but incline him to pity his own poor widdow, and her fatherless seed. Surely men had need to be very wary about Religion: They may indeed advance their own devotion to the utmost, and meet with a blessing thereby: but let them take heed how they lay bonds upon that nature or spirit; which is of a more excellent stamp then theirs, though at present laid lower then theirs, and more smitten by the Lord, and afflicted. Remember that passage, *They persecute him whom thou hast smitten.*

hath been from his revelations unto his Prophets. From them alone hath been known what God is, what God hath done, what God will do; and what God requireth of his people at present. Indeed every creature (much more the nature of man) speaketh the nature and will of God; but who is so skilful as to read what is written, or hear what is spoken there? Dul-spirited man needeth a plainer letter or language, to cause him to understand any thing of his God.

There were two peoples which God visibly took upon him to teach: The one was that famous people of the *Jews*, The other, That body of *Disciples* gathered by the Apostles of Christ out of all Nations. *Moses*, and the *Prophets* inceeding him were the light of the one, *Christ* and his *Apostles* the light of the other. The one was to observe *Moses*, till the coming of Christ in the flesh; the other was to observe the doctrine and discipline of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, till the coming of *Christ* in the Spirit. I do not mean until his sending down of the Spirit upon them after his ascension, but till his own return in the Spirit, until which time the Prophecies and instructions of the Scripture (both old and new) was to be their light. It is true, there were deceivers among both: There were false Prophets formerly in the old time, and false Apostles and teachers in the time of this new dispensation; but yet there was also a truth, and true ministers thereof. Which truth once delivered and settled, was to bee the touchstone of all doctrines and spirits afterward. *To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (or morning) in them.* (The Lord will justify the Law, and make it honourable: the true morning light, yea the very full day-light, doth not destroy the word in either dispensation viz. of Law or Gospel, but doth comprehend and fulfil it in both.) *Contend earnestly for the*

the faith, which was once delivered to the Saints, faith the Apostle Jude.

The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes, &c. Psal. 119. 7. The word is that which is suited to the present dispensed life. It is able to beget it, it is able to preserve it, it is able to feed and nourish it. It can convey it unto God, it can instruct and enable it to walk with God: It can check and discipline it when it walks awry, It can comfort and rejoyce the heart, when it keeps within the bounds of its own life and purity: yea it is able to carry the man of God so far as he can go in this dispensation of life. Very full is that place, 2 Tim. 3. v. 16. 17. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (or the whole Scripture is breathe from God, as Broughton renders it) and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Here is sure and full ground of footing for the nature and whole course of the life of the new man. This can thoroughly furnish the man of God with that light and life, which is requisite to every good work. Indeed men may aspire to a kind of knowledg of things beyond what the word holds out, but alas to what certainty can they attain therein? Are any of the vain imaginations of mans heart, worthy to be compared with the solid revelations of Gods understanding Spirit? Alas, it is not for poor low man, in this weak dispensation of things, to aspire to a perfect kind of knowledg! it is well if he may be favoured to reach that which may kindle life in him through the word.

There are two grounds of knowledg, The testimony of others concerning things and our own experience, both

which are to be tried by the word (by the testimonies and experiences which are to be found there) which is so far certain, and available to try both doctrines and spirits, as it is truly comprehended. Very deep lieth that root of certainty, where Christ and the Spirit meet, and are assured of each other. Christ is certain in the Spirit, and the Spirit is certain in Christ, or rather both these are certain in the nature of that root, which they find in each other. Neither of these are to be known or distinguished by the flesh; but both of these may be tasted, and discerned by that nature which is born of God. But what shall poor men do in the mean time? Truly he cannot be groundedly assured, until he be let within the circumference of the true and living light. He may have light to measure things within the line of this or that dispensation, wherein at present he may be planted: but his exaltation by that light, and his confidence because thereof, is still the occasion of his fall. (*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*)

I have many times had the debate in my self, whether the Spirit of the Lord (after that dispensation by Christ the son of God) were left to his own liberty, or were bound up in his operations within the letter of the Scriptures? The Spirit of the Lord cannot be bound by any other spirit; but the Lord may bind up his own spirit, and may give him his line (both under the Law and under the Gospel) according to which he may command him to breath and act, and no otherwise. A man hath the command of his own spirit, and hath not the Lord of his? Christ though he was equal with God, yet he was also his servant: and it is no disparagement to the Spirit of the Lord to be Christ's servant. There seemeth little less held out to the sense of my spirit in that 16. of John ver. 13. 14. 15. *Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of*

of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you. Here are three eminent things held out by Christ concerning the Spirits influences upon, and operations toward his disciples.

1. It is affirmed that he shall not speak of himself. The Spirit hath not this prerogative to speak of himself; nor are Disciples to receive any thing simply because he speaks it (although such is the truth of his nature that he may be trusted, when once it is certainly known that it is he that speaks) but because by the light which Christ left with them, they know how to measure his ministration (though not of themselves, without the aid of his Spirit.) Therefore are they put upon it so often to try the spirits, because they had wiser wish to do it: but we not having that which they had, are not able to try as they could.

2. It is declared from whence he shall speak, which is, from what he hears, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. This was the Law which Christ had from the Father, according to which he acted (He was the Fathers Minister, and spake what he heard from, and saw in the Father.) The Father opened his ear to hear as he learned: And so the Spirit of the Lord, coming from the Father and the Son, with revelations of their minds to Disciples, is to have his ear and tongue opened, faithfully to hear and deliver what they speak.

3. It is particularly expressed from whence he shall have what he is to speak, which is from Christ, or out of Christs treasury. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. This is the great honour of Christ (for what greater honour can he have then) to have the Spirit to be his messenger, his servant, his mouth,

mouth, to speak his words. The Spirit begat and nourished up Christ, not of himself, but from the Father: and the Spirit begetteth and bringeth up all the seed, not of himself, but from Christ. Now will I speak most freely; that to the form of any letter, I cannot imagine the Spirit of Christ to be bound up, but only to the substance of that truth which Christ delivered to his Apostles, which, I think I may safely say, is not to be varied til Christs second coming. And it is very observable that in those Epistles from Christ in Heaven to the Churches Rev. ch. 2. and ch. 3. there is not any new thing taught, but only reproofs for erring from, or encouragement to stick to the already delivered truths.

And surely, as that light which God gave out by *Moses* and the *Prophets*, was intended for the light of the *Jews*: so the revelations of the truths of the Gospel, by *Christ* and his *Apostles* through the Spirit, was given out to be the light of *Christians*. *Moses* and the *Prophets* were the proper light for that time of the *Jews*; and *Christ* and his *Apostles* were the proper light for the age or generation of *Christians*. They were both such as God judged sufficient lights in their seasons. With the one was the time or day of the *Jews* shut up; and with the other is the day or time of the *Disciples* of *Christ* to be closed up: wherefore the Apostle here adviseth *Christians*, to take heed to it til the day dawn, intimating thereby its duration til then. The same thing seemeth implied also in that solemn passage of *Christs*, Rev. 22. ver. 11. 12. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* As if he had said: I have spoken my mind by my spirit, I have been faithful in holding out my light (to the world)

world) which I received from my Father, I have finished my testimony in my own flesh, and in the flesh of my Apostles and witnesses: And now let the world deal with this light as they please; I mean to make no more noise, but to come stealing both upon the world and upon Disciples, to take account of this and of all other my ministrations. And if ye mark it, ye shall find this to be the life of Christians, viz. walking in this light, and expecting Christ, to Titus 1. ver. 11. 12. 13. and in many other places.

We have also a more sure word of Prophecy.

This testimony from God the Father (which Peter and some other of the Apostles heard at Christs transfiguration on the mountain) *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*, was a very sure thing: but that testimony, which God gave concerning him by his holy Prophets in the Scriptures, is more sure. This was a thing indeed of great honour and assurance to us, but the other is a firmer bottom for you to build on. And let it be well considered whether the other be not also more certain in its own nature? Is not the opening of the nature of things in the Scripture, to the nature and eye of that spirit which is fitted by God to receive them, a far clearer ground to build upon, then the sound of an audible voice to the outward ear. The understanding is fairly led into the one, the other is received only by report, which these two doubts may very well accompany; First whether it be God who speaketh? And secondly, whether I rightly understand his words? Both which by the manifestation of things to the eye of my present understanding, are avoided.

Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.

The word is to be diligently perused, considered, weighed and observed by them for whom it is writ. Shall God vouchsafe to speak to man from Heaven to instruct,

direct, correct and comfort his people, and they not take notice of it? Every word of the Lord is weighty in his own spirit, and ought to bear weight with mans spirit. These Disciples, though they were begotten unto God out of the world by the grace of God, (for to such the Apostle writeth, *to them that have obtained like precious faith with us*, saith he ver. 1.) though they had the spirit of God given to them and dwelling in them (as was generally to believers in those daies) though they were born of God and made partakers of the divine nature; yet they were not to neglect, but to consider and observe the Scriptures. Indeed the true light maketh the Scripture shine, though the full light maketh it wax dim. The light of the day swalloweth up the light of the night: but the light of the night is very precious, and of very great use in the night.

Very precious are the instructions and experiences which are held forth in the Scripture. Its chief subject is the new life, and the course of it in the midst of this dark principle, wherein it is involved. There you have its motions toward God, and the various dealings of God with it. There are related the several hardships it is to meet with, both on the one hand and on the other, and how (notwithstanding all discouragements and afflictions) the true life hath passed on, keeping its hold of God even in the midst of his frowns, and what the sweet issue and success hath been. There are strong inducements to pray and wait, to take up the cross daily, and follow Christ faithfully in the course of regeneration unto the end. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.* Elias likewise was a man subject to like passions as we are, and yet by faith and prayer what strange things did he do? *Yea whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning* (saith the great Apostle)

that

that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now these things being intended by God, and left in the world by his providence, for the direction and benefit of his people, they do in no wise answer this care and tenderness of God, without diligent improving and making use thereof, according to their several occasions and conditions.

As unto a light that shineth in a dark place.

The word of Prophecy is a *Light*: There is in it the light of truth, flowing from the Spirit of truth. Take it in what part of it soever, whether in relating things past, present, or to come, or in opening the natures or events of things, it doth all truly, and from true light. As there is in the words of a man, rationally spoken, the light of reason: so in all the expressions of Christ or his holy Prophets and Ministers) concerning spiritual things, there is the light of the Spirit.

This light *shineth*. Light, indeed, lighted cannot but shine. Light in the seed (or light sown) shineth not: but light sprung up, light brought forth cannot but shine: and no man questioneth its shining, but he that wanteth an eye. Yet mans sight, or observation of the light, doth neither hinder nor further its shining.

In a dark place. The light shineth in the darkness, though the darkness comprehend it not. The nature of man, the spirit of man, yea this whole world is a dark place. In this dark place Christ hath spoken, but who hath heard? (who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed) yea the light still shineth in it, but who seeth the shining of the light? Such principles of darkness, such various courses of darkness, and such manifold operations of darkness could not so abound, if the shining of the light were discerned. Yet (though it be not spiritually and righteously acknowledged) here is the light, here is the life, here is the safety of the people of God, yea and

of the world also : (for the Prophets of God, and the Apostles of Christ were the *light* and *salt* of the earth.) How dark is the world, in respect of a little light of the word? How dead is every thing, in compare, with the life of the word? Yea & in what danger are the Saints themselves, when they wander from the word? when they will be wise without, or beyond the word?

Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.

The word shall not alwayes remain a light. It is but a *lamp*, but a light in the night. When the day dawns, when Christ riseth up in the Spirit, when the writing of God in the natures and spirits of his people is opened, then shall they no longer need or look after an outward letter.

Until the day dawn. The day will dawn, the day-star will arise. It hath been night a long season, and O how tedious hath the night been! The darkness of the night hath overtaken and swallowed up al the light of the foregoing day, and how thick and of what length it hath been! yet surely for all this, the *day will dawn*, the *day-star will arise*.

And it will be *in your hearts*. Though Christ will come stealing upon you, yet ye shall not be troubled to find him out: for that light of his shall arise in you, which shall lead you to him. The wise men had a *Star* to guide them to Christ: and ye shall have light, ye shall have a *Star* likewise. The day shall dawn upon you, the day-star shall arise in your own spirits. Christ who hath been afflicted, persecuted, crucified and slain in you, shall arise, shine, and live in you.

And when the day doth dawn, when the day-star doth arise, then farewell the Letter of the Scriptures. When the spirit of life is come to deliver his own mind, it is fit the Letter (which was to testify concerning him) should be silent, and give place to him who is the substantial and enduring light.

CHRIST

CHRIST

THE

UNIVERSAL LIGHT,

Both of the World and of his Seed,
 who setteth up his Light, both in
 their Natures, and in the several di-
 spensations of God toward each.

JOH. I. VER. 9.

*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that com-
 meth into the world.*

Here are two Worlds; the inward, the
 outward: the natural or rational world,
 and the supernatural or spiritual. Both
 these worlds came from Christ (*by him
 he made the Worlds*) and Christ is the
 Light of them both. He lighteth every
 one that is born of God, and cometh into the inward
 world; and he lighteth every one that is born of man,
 and cometh into the outward world.

I call this outward world the rational world, because
 that is the head and principality of the life thereof, com-
 prehending

prehending in its nature (and having there the power of ordering and commanding) all visible and sensible things.

Christ is called the True Light in opposition to all false lights, and in distinction from all interior true lights, who fall short of him not only in degree, but in nature and kind. All other true lights are but shadows of him (They may indeed be true shadows, but they have not this truth in them.) *The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* So that though they are true lights, in that which they hold forth from God unto men, not only in the eye of man, but with God also: yet the being and truth of their nature vanisheth before the being and truth of his nature, as the shadow doth before the substance.

Now, Christ lighteth, both the world and the people of God, two waies. First in their natures, and secondly in the various dispensations of God.

1. For their *natures*, He formeth in each an eye suitable to that estate of being into which he formeth him. Thus he formeth the eye of *Adam* in the nature of *Adam*, and the eye of the new life or child in the new life or child. There is in every old man the eye of his reason, the eye of his natural understanding to see the things of reason and humanity with: And there is in every new man the eye of his spirit, or the eye of his new understanding, to behold the things of divinity and spirituality with: yea, *the Law of natural sobriety, righteousness and holiness* is written in the nature of man, and *the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, is written in the nature of the new-born Spirit; *I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.* As God writ his Law in Christs heart (*thy Law*, saith he, *is in the midst of my bowels:*) so Christ writes his Law in the heart of man; his old Law in the heart of the old man, his new Law in the

the heart of the new man. Hence it is that the conscience within a man (wherein is the inward sense of this light, and which giveth testimony unto it) doth so often speak unto a man, ever and anon whispering somewhat in his ears, either by way of advice, reproof, accusation or excule.

2. For the *various dispensations of God*. There have been two great dispensations of God toward the world, wherein his dispensations toward his people also have been carried on, though very mystically: The one is that of *the Law* by the hand of *Moses*, the other, that of *the Gospel* by the hand of *Christ and his Apostles*. Both these were partly to refresh that light which was left in the nature of man (though much shattered, confounded and mixed) as also to point man to an higher light, to a light of an higher kind and nature. In the Law there was the light of nature revived, in the Gospel there was the same light further heightened, and in both there was somewhat further added. And both these dispensations had an inward and outward part: an outward part, wherein the spirit of man was exercised; an inward part, wherein the spirit of life was exercised.

So that there are four great lights, which have been set up and have given light to the world. First, *the Light of Nature*. Secondly, *the Light of the Law*. Thirdly, *The Light of the Gospel*. Fourthly, *The Light of the renewed Nature or of Faith*, which both giveth light to, and receiveth light from the other lights, in this present station and condition wherein it is set and placed.

The Light of Nature, that is the general light of every man. *The Light of the Law* was the particular light of the Jews. *The Light of the Gospel* was the particular light of Christians. *The Light of the new Nature, or of Faith*, was the particular Light of the Seed, whether sought out and redeemed by God in the common estate of nature,

nature, or under the Law, or under the Gospel.

All these lights have an agreement, and yet withal a difference. The light of nature is moreful, at least in some parts of it, then either the light of the Law or Gospel. God hath not written the rule of natural *sobriety, righteousness, and holiness*, in either of them so plainly, as in the book of nature. Yet, as the present estate and condition of man is, he may read more in either, then in the book of nature. But REDEMPTION (whether it be written in nature or no, yet) surely it is hard to be read by the creature, save in the light and revelations of one of these dispensations.

By the three former of these lights God hath only made an essay upon the nature and spirit of man (for none of these have been able to preserve man and lead him to life. Set him upright in nature, he falleth: set him upright under the dispensation of the Law, he falleth again: set him upright under the dispensation of the Gospel, he falleth yet again.) The fourth light doth only beget, bring forth, and establish in eternal life.

The Scripture speaketh of an *everlasting Gospel*. There is an everlasting life, and the light of an everlasting Gospel which leadeth unto it. The light of the Law, in a sense, may be said to be everlasting, and the light of that dispensation of the Gospel, by Christ in the flesh, may be said to be so in a deeper sense: yet both these dispensations have an end, neither of them being *the great truth*, but to be swallowed up *by the truth*, which runneth secretly within them.

Now by these lights shall every one be judged, according to the dispensation under which he hath been placed. There is no man can be excused for want of light, Doubtless he is the more condemnable, who hath had the greater light: yet he cannot be free from guilt, who hath had any light at all. And therefore all men, having had

had light; are guilty before God, and must fall either before the light of nature, the light of the Law, or the light of the Gospel. Yet, in their fall, the judgment will not be confuted; but so far as they have answered any of these lights, the holy and righteous nature of the Lord cannot but justify them: insomuch as the very Heathen, so far as they observe the light of nature, shall be justified before Jews, yea and before Christians too, who are careless both of the light of their own dispensation, and also of that of the Law, and of that of nature, foolishly imagining to be justified by that Law of grace, whose instructions they regard not. *The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world, Tit. 2. 11. 12.* They who are the Schollers of the grace of God, to learn this lesson from it, shall undoubtedly be saved by it: but the blood of Christ was never appointed to wash away sins from any, but where the Spirit of Christ was also to dwell in power, purifying the heart. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. 6. v. 7, 8.* Men are exceedingly mistaken about their sanctification (reckoning that for purity and holiness, which is not so before God) if they be as much mistaken in their justification, what will become of them? O how flat will every man be laid, who now lifteth up his head without the true nature and light of God!

The great happiness which the Scripture so much speaketh of, is the happiness of the new nature. This is the child, this is the heir, this hath the seed of eternal life in him at present, and to him doth the eternal inheritance appertain. The *Moralist*, the *Jew*, the *Christian*,

stian, they are very excellent, walking faithfully in the light of their dispensations, but they are not this thing. There is an excellent end toward which all their righteousness aims (yea could they be righteous in their several lines, they should live:) but this life, this happiness appertains not to the righteousness of their dispensations; but only to the child, who is from the seed and of the nature of the Father.

Yet besides the happiness and life of the new man, there is also the life and happiness of the old man, or a life and happiness proper to that nature, as well as a life and happiness proper to the new nature. For even this nature was also made for God, and pants after the enjoyment of God; and surely this nature is not to be thrown away, but to be taken into the enjoyment of, and to be taught to enjoy God. But before it can be able to do either of these, it must be new formed, new made, and new born. It must be turned into a seed, and cast into the womb, and be brought forth a new. It must have all its *old heaven* taken away, and it be new seasoned, and made a *new lump* by the leaven of the Kingdom: for except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

This then is the meaning of Christs lighting every one that comes into the world, namely, he at least kindles the light of that nature in him which belongs to him, (if he do not also quicken it, and further blow it up by the heat and influence of some dispensation from above:) but he doth not kindle his divine light in every one that comes into this outward world, nor indeed in any but only such as are new made.

And doubles as Christ hath kindled this light in every man, so every man is to hearken to this light. If the Heathen were to hearken to the outward voice of rain and fruitful seasons, whereby God filled their hearts with food
and

and gladness; then surely much more should they attend to that inward candle, which he hath set up in their own spirits. Yet as no man can read and understand aright the book of the Law, or the books of the Prophets without an interpreter, no more can he the book of nature.

There are great impediments within man (besides those round about) which make this language very obscure unto him. One is the dulness of his own ears (*God speaks once, yea twice, man wil not hear*, saith *Elisha*) another is the lowness and interruptedness of this voice, which speaks in stillness, and as it were by snatches in the inner mind, making no noise in the senses; yea and there is also in him the voice of a stranger, which strives to cozen him with her counterfeited voice in stead of the truth: And this voice hath great advantage over the other, partly from her own loudness and importunateness, and partly from mans readines to hear and acknowledge her voice as the truth, rather then the voice of Christ, *I am come in my Fathers name, and ye receive me not*, saith Christ, *if another shall come in his own name, him ye wil receive*. The light of this strumpet (*viz.* the vain reasonings and imaginations of a mans own heart, wherein most commonly lieth in twisted the art and subtilty of Satan) which clotheth her self with the garments and appeareth in the guise of truth, is more sutable, pleasing, and serviceable to man (it being indeed but darkness) then the light of the Spirit of Christ, whose light is only sutable and pleasing to the holy Nature of God, and to that nature which is begotten of him.

Therefore is the misery of man great at present, and his passage (through every dispensation) to ruin and destruction certain, without the especial grace and guidance of God, who by the death of his own life in man, bringeth man back to the truth of that life also which he hath now lost, and vainly so many waies seeketh to recover.

THE TIMES OF REFRESHMENT.

ACT. 3. VERS. 19.

Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

IN this verse there are these four things held forth.

1. That there are *times of refreshing*. Every life is oppressed and overborn; Every life under every dispensation is run out of breath, and lies gasping and panting under that weight that overbears its tender spirit. The natural life of man and of the creatures; The outwardly renewed life of the Jews, the inward new life of Christians, they are all lost and worn out: They suffer and groan in pain and travel, in all their motions under all their dispensations. But there is a time to come when each life shall be refreshed and restored, when each life shall fetch breath again, and live and enjoy it self; when all the nations, kindreds, and families of the earth shall draw their own lives, and the vigor of their own spirits out of the life and spirit of Abraham, *in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*. There hath been as yet but a very

very little appearance of these lives; yea & presently, upon that small appearance they have been pursued and overwhelmed by the power of death and misery: and though they are not perfectly extinct, yet they all lye under bondage and corruption, so over-born with the weight of misery that lieth upon them, that they are hardly able to breath. It hath pleased the Lord who brought them forth, to suffer them thus to be chased and crushed for an appointed season. But there is another appointed season also, wherein they shall be refreshed by that redemption and fresh vigor wherewith the Lord will one day visit them.

2. That these times of refreshing are to *come from the presence of the Lord*. All things live to God, all things are fresh and lively in his presence. He is the resurrection and the life of all that fall and dies. He breatheth upon things and they live, he draweth back his breath they perish. Their life indeed vanisheth from them, but that very life still lives before him; yea it is fresh, full, and flourishing in his presence: and when that freshness and liveliness cometh forth from the Lord, issuing out of his presence, then shall all things into which it floweth, find that life which is now fresh in him and before him, fresh and vigorous also in themselves.

3. That then (namely at these times of refreshing) is the proper season for *the blotting out of sin*. Then it shall be discovered what hath been already done therein; and what hath been truly begun here, shall there be perfected. Men now blot out sins in their own spirits, according to their own apprehensions, but then the Lord will shew whose sins he hath blotted out. The *Natural man*, the *Jew*, the *Christian*, have all their several waies of justifying themselves from their sins: but the Lord alone can truly do it, and this is his appointed time for the doing of it. Indeed, the blotting out of sins, both

under the Law and under the Gospel; though they were very real and true according to the line of each dispensation; yet they had also been a typical act in them, pointing at that which is to be done most perfectly and substantially at this great day.

4. That Repentance and Conversion now out of this evil spirit, wherein mans nature is so entangled, into the Nature; Life and Spirit of the Lord, is the true way to remission then. He that is truly sorry for, and turned by the Lord out of what he was, into the image of the Lord, shall then have no sin laid to his charge, but as perfectly removed from his person, as it is now from his heart. The Lord will blot out his sin, as that he nor any else shall be able to read it in him, upon him, or concerning him. *In that time, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

A DISTINCTION

ABOUT

ORPHANS-HIS.

JOH. 14. VER. 18.

I will not leave you Orphans, I will come to you.

He is not an Orphan who hath a Father, though his Father at present be gone into some far country from him, and leave him in a wilderness or in an unknown Land. Thus none of the Seed are or can be Orphans.

But yet, in respect of any sensible enjoyment or benefit those who are thus left may be termed Orphans. And thus the Disciples of Christ were at the departure of Christ, till the descent of the Spirit. (And thus may any sort of men be said to be, after their being brought home to God by any dispensation, in the night of that dispensation.)

But the Spirit, when he came, he was as it were a new Father to them. He, by his presence and life, removed the desolation of that estate, wherein they were left by the departure of Christ.

But since that time, such Christians as have the true nature in them, and yet have not this Spirit to be a light and.

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and companion to them, they are again become Orphans: though not perfect Orphans, because they have a Father; yet in the condition of Orphans, because they want the presence and comfort of a Father.

THOR A

The ground of the worlds hatred against the Seed of Christ, or the true and chief ground of persecution, which alwaies hath been and still is the ground, though it was never so acknowledged.

JOH. 15. VER. 19.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

If the *Life*, the *Wisdom*, the *Religion* which appears in the Disciples of Christ, were of the world, both it would be esteemed by the world, and they would be esteemed because of it. It is natural to the world to love its own. Man cannot but prize their root and fruits of his own nature. The wisdom, the righteousness, the Religion of the world is alwaies beloved by the world. This makes the world so zealous to have the principles and practises of their Religion spread, and to have all conformed to it, because it is their own. The *Jews* were not
so

so eager of converting proselites to their Religion, because it was Gods (though that was the ground of their heat of desire therein, as they thought) as because it was their own. Indeed men have several waies and strains of Religion, wherein they differ one from another, which maketh them (through their weakness and mis-understanding) many times very opposite one to another, but could they but equally and impartially hear one another, they would soon agree, finding the same nature and spirit, though working variously, yet still according to it self, in them all.

It is most natural to man to love his own nature and spirit: and what hath that kind of loveliness in it, cannot but be esteemed by him. All devotion which naturally floweth from, and is suitable to the human spirit, is lovely in the eye of the human spirit. It is not man, but rather a devilishness, or at least a brutishness in man, which in any degree setteth him against this. If therefore the Disciples of Christ did agree with the world in this spirit, they might possibly make their peace with the world: but their vast and innate difference herein, is the ground of an indissoluble and irreconcilable enmity. *Because ye are not of the world, But I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

The world is so far from loving, that it doth directly hate a Disciple of Christ. There is no peace between the life of the world, and the life of Christ: but in whomsoever the life of Christ is found, it is hated by the world; and the vessel also wherein it is found, is hated for its sake. Now the ground, of the worlds hatred of these persons, here laid down, is double.

1. *Because they are not of the world.* All love ariseth from union, or at least from likeness. That therefore which is rent from the world, that which is contrary (in its whole being and appearance) to the world, I must

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needs excite and draw forth its hatred: It being not of the world, it comes not within the rule of the worlds love; which is to love its own: nay this its difference from, and contrariety to the world, exceedingly exposeth it to the ill will and hatred of the world. Now do but a little consider, ye shall find them very different from the world, both in their *root*; in their *nature*, in their *condition*, in their *course*, and in their *end*.

1. They are *of a different root* from the world. They are *of the Father*; they are *the Seed of God*. All their life, all their motions spring from a root different from the world. They come from the Spirit of Christ; they proceed from the Father. They are not born of any of the principles of the world, but of the light of God, who by his own Spirit and life formeth them and saith, *Let there be Light, and there is Light*. The world consists of, and is changed by the light in it self, by the several windings and turnings of its own principle: but they by a new light, by a new principle, which transplants them both out of themselves and out of the world. Now as *all that is in the world, is not of the Father, but of the world*: So all that is in this life, in this seed, is not of the world, but of the Father.

2. They are *of a different nature* from the world. Their temperament, their constitution is different. The Spirit that is in them, with all that flowes from it, is of a different kind from that which is in the world. The *Wisdom* in them, the *Faith* in them, the *Love* in them, the *Sweetness*, *Meekness* and *Patience* in them (and so whatsoever else is formed by the Nature and Spirit of God in them) very vastly differs from that kind of these which is to be found in the world. Theirs is all of that same nature, principle, and Spirit of life which is let in upon them, whereas the worlds is only that which is found in them: It may perhaps be much awakened, provoked,

and heightened, insomuch as to themselves it may seem clean another thing from what it was; before it was thus quickened in them, but in its root and nature it is still the same. All the Religion that is to be found in the world, look over the strictest sorts of men, even those that think they stick most close to the word (as several sects among the *Jews* did) yet it is all but of the nature of man; but from and according to the nature of man. It may indeed be kindled by a power from Heaven, but look upon it in it self, it is but earth. But *Christ is the Lord from Heaven*, and what he begets in the Spirits of his Seed, is of his own Heavenly nature, even when it is most cloathed not only with the excellency, but with the weakness, nay with the corruption of flesh.

3. *They are in a different estate and condition.* They are accepted and justified; take them at the worst, whereas the world is condemned and rejected; take it at the best. This *Nature*, this *Life* wherever it be sowed, will spring forth, even out of the ashes of sin, death, misery, and destruction: the nature of man, the life of man will sink out of blessedness into misery. *Adam* being in honour, did not abide. The *Jews* being reared out of the ruins of man, fell again. And the *Christians* who were raised yet higher, fell yet lower. Is not the *Lords* choice lovely? Surely there is nothing can make it unlovely, nor can any thing make the world lovely.

4. *Their course and conversation is different.* They live not like the world. Their *conversation* is in Heaven, and their whole course here on earth is Heavenly. Look upon the in their retirements, in their publick demeanor, in their worshipping of God, in their dealings with men, in use of the creature in their apparel, gestures, &c. they are in nothing like the world. He that is formed of the Spirit of man, though into never so devout Religion according

to the flesh, is earthly in the best of his Heavenliness: but he that is formed of the nature and Spirit of God, cannot but give all his motions here on earth a tincture and savor of his own Heavenly nature.

5. *They differ in their end*, which is life, rest, happiness, enjoyment of God, &c. whereas all the beauty and excellency of the world, all their wisdom, all their Religion, all their zeal, all their holiness and righteousness must end in death. *All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.*

2. They are not only *not of the world*, but they are also *chosen out of the world*, which is a further provocation of the worlds hatred against them: *Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* The especial love of God to them maketh the world the more hate them. The world as it is contrary to God in its nature, so also in its affection. It loves what God hates, it hates what God loves. It chuseth what God abominates, and it abhors what God chuseth. That which is exalted above us, though it be of the same kind with us, causeth envy: but if it be contrary to us, its exaltation increaseth hatred. *Josephs brethren* could not endure the peculiarity of his Fathers love to him. How can the world bear that God should set that so far above them, which they look upon as so far beneath them? Consider now, if a poor, despised, mad, senseless generation to the eye of the world (as the Prophets and people of God ever have been) should start up, and implead all the Religion and righteousness that is extant in the world, as being hateful to God; prejudicial to the present good estate of mankind, and ending in death and misery, in the mean while appropriating to themselves the only true Religion, the only true life,

life, the only true blessedness, how hateful would this be to all sorts of Religious persons, who are the chief part of the World which the Scripture takes notice of? They are those which the Scripture commonly intends by the world, the rest of the earth (like a dead and barren thing, being not regarded by God. Christ himself explains whom he meant here by the world, namely, the Jews, or the Religious and Zealous among them, as he expressly affirms ch. 16. ver. 1. 2. 3. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the Synagogues: yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.* This was formerly the Church, the people whom God revealed himself unto, and who knew him; but their day is out (and indeed they were only representatively, not really so in their day) and now they are become the world. Their mask of holiness and Religion is taken off by the light of the Spirit of Christ, & now they appear, as they are but of the spirit of the world, such as knew neither the Father nor Christ, but through the ignorance, vanity and corruption of their own spirits, were persecutors of his children and led even unto death, under a pretence and imagination in their minds of doing service to God thereby. This is generally acknowledged, at this day, to be true concerning them: but he that now hath the same spirit, and doth now the same things, is not able to discern it concerning himself, but the same spirit blindeth him now, as blinded them then. The zeal of man is filthy and impure, and cannot comprehend in it the patience sweetness and meekness to Christ. Christ retaineth the tenderness of his nature and spirit in the midst of his greatest severity; but man is rigid and cruel, and only covereth the harshness and cruelty of his own nature and spirit (even from his own eye) with a pretext of zeal for God.

THE
BEST DEFENCE
AGAINST

THE WORLD,
Or Worldly Spirit, which is the wisdom and innocency of the renewed Spirit.

MATH. IO. VER. 16.

Behold, I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves: be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.



L the world is like a Wolf to the life of Christ. The life of Christ is like a sheep, and maketh that very spirit, and nature wherein it dwelleth, so also. The spirit of man, in evry Shape, is a Wolf that would fain prey upon it and devour it. Christ knoweth that they have need of a strong defence, and thus it that which he adviseth them unto on that behalf, namely to clothe themselves with wisdom and innocency. They must not secure themselves by doing harm to the *Wolves*, but by the wisdom of the Spirit.

and by their innocent temper and carriage in the spirit.

Now that which they are to secure, is not their outward man, their goods estate, good name, &c. All these they are to suffer loss of for Christ, These they are to expose to the world; this kind of sufferings they are not so much as to turn from, but readily to embrace with joy and delight: But that which they must make use of the wisdom of their spirits in, is in securing their spirits, in securing the nature and life of Christ in them.

This is that the *Wolves* aim at, and this is that they must watch to keep from the *Wolves*: which while they do, however the world may seem to overcome them, yet they are the victors. While they keep faith pure, while they live purely by faith, while they suffer quietly the injuries of the world, and only fight with the world by faith, the world is conquered. The strength of that life, against which the world fights, remains untouched by them, yea subjects and overcomes them in their minds and Spirits, while they do what they list with the bodies of those persons in whom this life dwells. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

These are the two things wherein a Christians strength lies, viz. *wisdom* and *righteousness*, where-with while his Spirit remains clothed, no enemy can touch him. While he walks in the line of the light and love of his own nature, and doth not seek to the wisdom of the flesh (which is folly, and only available to save the flesh) nor hath recourse to fleshly weapons (which are alwaies weak and insufficient to any spirituall defence) he is safe. If he wil deal with the world by fleshly weapons, or by the wisdom of the fleshly spirit, the world will be too hard for him: for there the world is stronger and wiser

wiser then he. But if he keep himself to the Law of his own spirit , and suffer not his flesh to be provoked by , or to fight with the flesh of the world ; but rather abase it before them , exposing it to their reproach and violence , by the power of that life within him : If he fight with them by the love of the Spirit , which alwaies bringeth forth righteousness and mercy toward them , he must needs secure himself (I mean , in his Spirit) and overcome them , if not to the view of their own consciences , yet certainly to the view of every truly enlightened eye.

Two Questions concerning Christ, which are not only very necessary in themselves, but also very usefull in reference to some things which went before, and to others which come after.

THE *Questions* are these. First, *what Christ is*? Secondly, *how Christ may be known*? If man had but light to lead him into these, and life to quicken him in these, how could he miss of salvation and happiness?
 Qu. 1. As touching the first of these, namey, *what Christ is*? I shall return this brief answer.

Antw. *Christ is the Fountain, the Head, and the Pattern of the new Nature.* He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the creation of God. I might add also that he is the former of this new nature or creature: He both slayeth the old nature or creature by the blast of his spirit, and by the breath of the same spirit he begetteth, formeth, quickeneth and bringeth forth the new nature or the new creature. For there is a new creation or new nature, at which the Scripture drives, and whereof it especially treats. *Behold I make all things new.*

The whole Fabrick of this world (with the whole course of it) is the old world, the old nature, the old estate of things which is to pass away. There is also a new world, a new nature, a new state of things. There is a new creature, a new womb, a new seed, and a new

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birth

birth for this creature, as also a new course for him to walk in toward life and happiness (for this creature hath a new rule, a new covenant.) Christ saith expressly, He that will *see the Kingdom of God*, must be born again of new water and of a new Spirit, The *Jews* were born again of water and of the Spirit: They were formed by the Spirit of God out of the world unto himself: They were circumcised from their filthiness, and made a new lump: The *Gentiles* also were made new by a stronger spirit, and by a more perfect circumcision and baptism: But both these were not the thing, but the thing it self lay deeply hidden under both these veils. The water and the Spirit whereof THE NEW CREATION is to be formed, is new in respect of both these, though both these also may be termed new in their severall respects. Now of this nature, of this creature, of this world Christ is the *Fountain*, the *Head*, the *Pattern*. The *Fountain* from whence it springs, the *Head* by which it is to be governed, and the *Pattern* according to which it is to be formed.

1. *He is the Fountain from whence it springs.* He is the *water*, and he is the *Spirit* of which the new child is born again. As *Adam* was the *Fountain*, from whence first his wife and then all mankind was to spring: so is Christ the *Fountain* of all his body the *Church*. *For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*; Ephes. 5. 30. Every believer is formed in Christ, and every believer is formed of Christ, he is made to them all that they are. Their nature is his; their spirit is his, their life is his, their righteousness is his, their holiness and happiness is his, and floweth or is communicated from him to them. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom; and righteousness; and sanctification, and redemption*, 1 Corinth. 1. 30. As *Eve* had the nature, the substance, yea all that she had from *Adam*: so hath the Church

Church or spouse of Christ from Christ. She is the Eve of this Adam.

2. *He is the head whereby it is to be governed. And he is the head of the body, the Church: from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God, Colos. 1. ver. 18. and ch. 2. ver. 19.* Hence it is that he is peculiarly anointed, and called of God to be a King, and is to give Laws and Rules to his Church. He was indeed in mockery stiled *the King of the Jews*, but yet that could not destroy the reality thereof. Yet (saith God) *have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion.* It is very observable, that Christ could not be drawn to deny that he was a King, even when he was put to it for his life, John 18. ver. 33. to 38. It is true he owned that his Kingdom was not of this world, but he would not deny his Kingship, nay indeed he could not, in fidelity to his Father, as he answered *Pilate*, when he urged him to it, ver. 37. *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.* God sent me into the world to preach that very Kingdom whereof I am King, and I cannot deny it. And he that is of the Kingdom, *every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.* That title which *Pilate* gave him, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS**, was very true in a deeper sense then either *Pilate* or the *Jews* understood it. For of all the true *Jews* *Christ is King*; he is the head of all that nature, life, and spirit, which springeth up in believers from himself.

3. *He is the pattern of all his Seed*, the copy of his whole body, who must all be conformed unto Christ their head. They must be conformed to him in his birth, in his circumcision, in his baptism, in his course of life, in his death, in his resurrection, ascension and glory. They

must be begotten and born of the spirit, as he was, or there is no seeing the Kingdom of God, Joh. 3. 5. They must also be circumcised as he was, Colos. 2. 11. 12. (Christ indeed came here and appeared in the flesh, but he had his fleshly nature cut off before he entred into the life and glory of God) And they must be baptised with him too, their spirits must be washed in his blood, and by his spirit: *for by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body*: The outward water and minister are but the type and representation of the thing, but it is the spirit that washeth the soul in the *Laver of regeneration*. And then they must also live (as he did) by that spirit wherewith they were baptised, and which upon their baptism they did receive (for it was as usual then to receive the spirit, as it was to be baptised. Stil when they were baptised the Holy Ghost fell upon them, which makes *Paul* wonder at the baptism of some of *Ephesus*, Act. 19. 2. What have ye not received the Holy Ghost? Why what kind of baptism was yours? *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked*, 1 Joh. 2. 6. *If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit*, Galath. 5. 25. And so for his death, every one is to drink of his cup, all are to have the power of the same death upon them, all are to sacrifice the same life which they receive from the same spirit in the flesh. And then they are also to rise, ascend and reign with him. *If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him*. This is most certain in the nature and ground of things, and most certainly beleevd by them, who discern the foundation of it there.

Qu. 2. How Christ may be known or distinguished?

Ans. Christ may be cleerly, distinctly, and infallibly known these several waies.

1. *By the exercise of the inward senses*. There is, in the man which is renewed, a new spirit, a new soul (as I may

may so say) and these have new faculties, new senses, by the exercise whereof these new persons come to know spiritual things. *Strong meat is for the perfect; who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*, Ebr. 5. 13. As there are natural senses, which discern and distinguish between that which is naturally good and evil, for the use and behoof of the natural man: so there are spiritual senses, which discern and distinguish between that which is spiritually good and evil, for the use and behoof of the spiritual man.

Now as these senses may discern and know other spiritual things, so also may they know and discern Christ, and may be able to distinguish him from all the false Christs that can come into the world: for there may come many false Christs, (with very great power and efficacy of deceiving) as well as there have come already many false Jews; and many false Apostles. Yet the same light which hath discovered these false Jews and false Apostles, (I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but a Synagogue of Satan, Revelat. 2. 9. And again, Them that tried them which say they are Apostles; and are not; and hast found them liars, ver. 2.) the same light can make these false Christs, (notwithstanding all the glittering glory of their appearing spirituality) so manifest to the very eye and senses of the elect, as that they shall not possibly be able to deceive them; Math. 24. vers. 23, 24.

2. By the demonstration of the spirit. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen; and hated both me and my Father, Joh. 15. 24. There was with Christ the finger of God, to point him out and demonstrate him to the very nature of man. He came in the power and demonstration of the spirit, evidencing himself unto mens consciences in the sight of God. Hereupon it

was that the *Jews* were blamed, that though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. There is an outward demonstration, and an inward demonstration of the spirit, both which have their vertue and power of manifestation, according to their nature, kind, and degree. God can veil and darken himself in every thing of this world, and God can unvail and reveal himself in any thing of this world. The power of creation is a proper product and manifestation of the God-head: and so was also that power of healing and delivering the creature, which appeared in Christ, and surely the *Jews* are most righteously blamed for not fairly considering of it, but hardening themselves against it. This may be called an outward demonstration. But then there is an inward demonstration (which is of a most excellent kind) namely, when God maketh manifest any spiritual thing, in the light of his own spirit, to the light of that spirit which is begotten by him. And thus Christ the head, and particular members of the body, and other spiritual things, are revealed to the spirits of his people at present, so far as God pleaseth; and are all to be perfectly revealed at last.

3. By the testimony of the spirit. The same spirit that openeth spiritual things, doth also add his own testimony that they are the truth; which testimony is of great esteem with them who know his voice. And indeed it cannot but be a great confirmation to any one, to whom God shewing a thing, to assure him by his spirit that it is the thing, and that the person is not mistaken concerning it, but seeth and understandeth aright. Now this the spirit doth as well concerning Christ, as concerning other spiritual things. The same spirit that testifieth with the soul or spirit, that it is a child; that it is a member, testifieth of Christ that he is the first-born; the first begotten, the head. When the bringeth in the first be-

gotten

gotten into the world. He is the first begotten the first born in nature, however it fell out that it was a long time before he was brought forth into the world. He came in the fulness of time, the untimely breach that his brother Adam made (for so he was according to the flesh) to come out a fore him, cost him a fall. This, I say, the same spirit testifieth. The same spirit which is self beareth witness without spirits, that we are the children of God, Rom. 8. 16. Beareth witness of Christ, that he is the beloved Son. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and again, This is my beloved Son, hear him. This was the way whereby his fore-runner John came to know him, namely, by this testimony together with the sign thereof, Joh. 1. vers. 33. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to Baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which Baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.

These considerations may help to open that difficult place, 2 Corinth. 12. 3. *That no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* Alas, any man (almost) thinks he can say it! but that is only saying, with God, which ariseth from a truly enlightened understanding. The Scripture saith, Rom. 10. ver. 9. *If thou confessest with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and beleeve in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* And yet Christ saith, *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderfull works? and yet then will he profess to them, I never knew you.* Surely these do in an high degree confess him to be Lord. They come to him with vehemency, They cry *Lord, Lord:* Here is a double confession, a full acknowledgment. And they beleeve his resurrection too (for that was

was the doctrine which they preached, and which they had the power of casting out devils, and working of miracles to confirm, and yet saith Christ; *I never knew you.* How can this be? How can both these stand? One place saith, whoever doth this shall be saved, and yet here Christ refuseth the very same persons who were eminent in the doing of this.

Why this is the truth: They do it indeed abundantly in their way, but they do it not in the truth. They do it not by the Nature of the Spirit of the Lord. They do it not by a spirit truly enlightened, inwardly enlightened, and made one with the spirit, but only by a spirit outwardly assisted by the spirit. They do it not by the light of the spirit incorporated into them, but only by the light of the spirit let out upon them, and for a season set up in their understandings. Now they may have abundance of this, and yet not be truly subjected to Christ in their hearts and natures: And so not being his, not having the nature of his spirit in their spirits, and so not understanding the truth in the inward man, but only in the outward understanding of their minds, they cannot in truth *beleeve* in Christ, nor in truth *confess* him. They can beleeve & confess according to the account of man, according to the account of this world (which may arise so high, as that the light, in this present weak & dark administration of things, may not have strength & clearness enough to implead them) but not according to the nature of truth: And so Christ, who is the true and righteous one, the faithful witness of God, cannot own this before God. Being not made free by the nature of truth, being not truly quickned by the nature of truth in the nature of their own spirits, Christ cannot own them as the freemen & heirs of God, but is necessitated to thrust them out among that spirit of the world whereof they are part, & with the devil is to retake & repossess again, notwithstanding its being thus swept and garnished. The

THE AN OINTING AND FUNCTION OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH 61. VER. 1. 2. 3.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me, to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound :

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn :

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

B *Efo re I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee ; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a Prophet unto the nations, said God to Jeremy, ch. 1. v. 5. But God did more for Christ, He begat him*

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him in the womb, he anointed him to be a greater Prophet. And because of his anointing to so great a work, did he proportionably pour forth of his Spirit upon him: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me.*

The anointing is the *designation, qualification* and *sanctification* of the person to his office. Thus the *Kings, Priests* and *Prophets* under the Law were anointed. The anointing is the diffusion of the oil of the Spirit, which God useth to pour out upon his Ministers. And these whom God anoints by his Spirits, he sends forth his Spirit with. Hereupon Christ had more of the Spirit upon him (more of the presence and power of the Spirit with him) than any that went before him, because he had more of the anointing, because he had more of the nature of God in him, and because the work of his ministry was greater, therefore had he more of the anointing. And because he had more of the anointing, therefore had he more of the Spirit. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach, &c.*

There was to be one great *Shepherd* to the flock, one great *Preacher* to the family and household of God, one great *Head and King* over his Church, one great *High-priest* and *Sacrificer* unto God. For this, to this great office, to this great work God anointed Christ. He appointed him to it, he sanctified and qualified him for it, and accordingly he gives him the fulness of his Spirit to be with him in it.

The Spirit of God, it is the present proper right, and the future inheritance of all the people of God. It belongs to all the Lords *Kings*, to all the Lords *Priests*, to all the Lords *Prophets*, yea to any that were sent out by God to any work of his. When the Lord called the *seventy Elders* to rule under *Moses*, he imparted to them the Spirit of *Moses*, *Numb. 11. ver. 17. and 25.*

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There is some proportion of his Spirit due (as I may so say) to the meanest servant in his family. His whole work is to be done by his own Spirit, and none employed by him in his service are to be without it. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, is none of his.* He is none of his seed, if he have not the nature and residence of his spirit in him; he is none of his servants, if he have not the power and presence of his spirit with him. Now Christ being appointed to be the Head, the Saviour, the Fountain of life and redemption to all the seed, the whole Spirit belongs to him: And for this cause did the Lord Baptise him with his Spirit, and his Spirit was so abundantly found upon him in the discharge of his ministry.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, &c.

There are many Preachers whom the Lord hath not sent, whom the Lord hath not anointed to preach, and upon whom the Spirit of the Lord is not. But Christ when he cometh, he cometh from the Lord, he cometh with the message of the Lord, he cometh in the anointing of the Lord, and with the Spirit of the Lord upon him. Now mark whom the eye of the Lord is upon, in anointing and sending his Son.

They are *the meek*. Not the rough spirit of man (that is devoted to destruction) but such as are made meek by the Lord, sons brought down by chastisement, spirits whom the Lord hath subdued by his rod, and melted in his furnace.

They are *the broken-hearted*: Such whose very hearts are broken by affliction, by misery, by the continual pressure of the hand of the Lord upon them. Perhaps ye may know what it is to suffer afflictions (for it is the common lot not only of the seed, but even of man also:)

but who knows what it is to have his heart broken by them? Yea to have all the life and strength of his new spirit or inner man dissolved thereby? The Lord brings forth *Adam a living soul*; The Lord by affliction breaks the heart of *Adam*, and then how miserable is he! But who knows the misery of having the life of Christ broken in him?

They are *the captives*: Those whose spirits are in captivity, as well as their bodies. The noble life of Christ in them, is captived by a strange power. The heir of Eternal life is made a bondslave, is led into a strange land and made a captive there.

And not only so, but he is *in prison* and in bands. This most noble principle and spirit of life, is wonderfully abused and debased, so fast laid in fetters as that it cannot fetch one clear (one pure) motion in life.

And in this condition they nothing but *mourn*. They are mourners without comfort. They are all besmeared, they *lye among the pots*; they are covered with ashes. If they *prophesy*, if they speak of any of the things of God, it is in *sackcloth*. Yea their very inward estate is most deplorable: for they have not only the outward tokens and signs of sorrow about them, but a *Spirit of heaviness* within, a load of pressures, a mighty load of death and bands upon their spirit.

Yet these are the persons whom the eye of the Lord is upon in anointing Christ to preach, and in causing his spirit to rest upon him, it is that he might minister luttably to these. He overlooks all the glory and soundness of the world, and pities the affliction of these, sending *his Physician*, with his own ballome, to visit and heal these.

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.

There is no good tidings from the meek, until Christ comes

comes and preaches it to them. In the world there is nothing but trouble for them, but in the Spirit of the Lord there is rest and peace. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people.* Indeed there is now little news from Heaven, and all the news that is upon earth is misery (both inward and outward) to these. *The meek shall inherit the earth*, but at present they are jostled out of it by the rough spirit of man. The meek hath no satisfaction, no enjoyment, no recompence of his meekness here. There is a time when all the motions of life tend to peace, and there is a time when they all tend to trouble, and that is the time of spiritual afflictions, wherewith the meek are still exercised here. But the Lord intends that Christ, when he comes, shall come with good news to these. Christ is anointed, and hath the Spirit of the Lord given him to bring to these *good tidings*. Those who are here called *meek*, are termed *poor* in the recitation of this Scripture, Luke 4. 18. Indeed the *poor in spirit* are meek. He that is rich, he that is conceited of his own spiritual worth and excellency, he may easily be rough and haughty: but he that is poor in the sight and sense of his own spirit, cannot but be humble and meek. He that hath high apprehensions of his living in Christ, or by the Spirit of Christ, his Spirit will be puffed up in him (as it was with the Church of *Laodicea*, *I am rich, saith shee, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing:*) but he that hath that life broken in him will be meek, and like a lamb dumb before the shearer, opening not his mouth.

He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted.

There are broken hearted ones, persons whose very hearts are broken by the sharpness, abundance, and extremity of misery. There is no binding up of these broken hearts by any Artist here. As there is none can thus break; so there is none can bind up these broken hearts:

so that they must needs remain broken til the coming of Christ, because none can cure this broken frame of spirit but he. But God sends Christ purposely to bind up these, yea he lets out his own spirit upon him for this very end, that he might know how to heal these tenderly. *The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.* Now as there were sicknesses and wounds prepared against Christs first coming (as Joh. 9. ver. 3. so also against his second: And then Israel shall understandingly and effectually say, *Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two daies will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, we shall follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth.*

To proclaim liberty to the captives.

There is a captivity, a dreadful captivity, a captivity of the life of Christ: wherein, and whereby the captivity of man, and of the creature also, is more felt and im-bittered. He that hath the life of Christ enslaved in him, hath also his natural spirit and elementary constitution more enslaved, then other men have. Now, there is no redemption from this captivity, but by the coming of Christ. But when he comes as the Prophet of the Lord, anointed by the Lord, with the Spirit of the Lord upon him, he shall *proclaim liberty* to these. Men may strive to speak freedom to them, but alas for all that their captivity will still remain: but when the son proclaims unto them freedom, they shall be free indeed.

And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

O how great, how terrible, how close are the bonds and fetters of this life! who can open the prison wherein they

they are shut ! who can loosen the bonds wherewith they are bound ! who can *say* to these prisoners, *Come forth.* No, there is no redemption, there is no coming forth, there is no unbinding them, until Christ come with commission and power from the Lord. But when Christ comes, he will do it; it is one of the main ends of his coming.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Christ is the Lords *Trumpeter* to proclaim the Lords *Jubilee*, wherein every one shall return to their possession of life and inheritance in Christ. We have squandered away our life, we have squandered away our portion, we are run into debt, and are laid in prison: but in the Lords year we shall be set free. It is the Lords year, wherein the Lord will reign in love, in bounty, in goodness, in Majesty, life and glory among his people.

And this will be an *acceptable year*; acceptable to them, and acceptable to the Lord: For indeed, neither their own spirits, nor the Lords doth like their present captivity and misery; (Neither of them like it directly, though referentially both may like it.) but this will be a pleasant year to both, wherein both shall be perfectly acceptable to each other, and every thing done by each acceptable unto each. Redemption will be acceptable, the recovery of life acceptable, the enjoyment of God acceptable to them: and their appearing like the people of God, and their exact answering of all the motions of his spirit, will be acceptable to him.

And the day of vengeance of our God.

The time of their redemption will be the time of *vengeance*. God will relceve their broken spirit, but will break the stiff spirit of the world. This is the day of judgment of proud and lofty man; so Isa. 35. 4. *Say to them that are of a fearful heart; Be strong, fear not: behold, your*

your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you. And then you shall have rest, but they trouble, 2 Thess. ch. 1. ver. 6. 7. O how sweet will God be to these poor afflicted ones, and how terrible to the unbroken ones! God hath hitherto only threatned vengeance, telling man that he would be meet with him one day: but then he will execute it so fully and visibly, that men shall generally say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Of our God. God is *our God*, the God of Christ and of his Seed. The world do but take his name in vain, for he is not their God (in the sense here intended:) Christ and his people only do him right in appropriating him to themselves.

To comfort all that mourn.

Mourning very properly attends affliction. A broken, captived, afflicted spirit cannot chide but mourn. And for these there is no comfort, no comforter. But God will one day send Christ to comfort these, yea to comfort them all. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* There is not any one mourner in the life and Spirit of Christ, whom God hath not prepared comfort for in Christ; and whom he will not one day send Christ to comfort. Tender-spirited Christ, is filled with bowels to drown all misery, is furnished with Physick to cure all diseases, yea and with a spirit of life and liberty to banish death and slavery from the spirits of all his.

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion.

Great care hath the Lord of his mourners, of *them that mourn in Zion.* (It is not every sort of mourners whom God is thus solicitous about, but *them that mourn in Zion.*) The first and chief work of Christ is concerning them. That life, vertue, and power of the spirit, which

which Christ comes with anointed from the Lord, must first be laid out upon them.

And when he comes, he shall appoint unto them; he shall cut out for them their portion! Now enemies appoint to them, now enemies have them in fetters and dispose of them; but then he shall appoint to them? And what will he appoint to them? Why surely clean contrary to what now befalls them?

To give unto them beauty for ashes.

They are now besmeared ones, they are now deformed with ashes. Their *visage* is more marred than any mans, and their form more than the sons of men (as is said concerning Christ, Isa. 52. 14.) alas, the miseries that befall man, do nothing so break and crush him, as the miseries which befall them do them. *Their visage is blacker than a coal*, (as it was said concerning Jerusalem the tipe) Lament. 4. 8.

Dust and ashes are the original and end of all things. Out of dust were things formed (especially man:) and into dust or ashes are they returned. *Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty* (saith God to Tiras) *but I will bring thee to ashes*, Ezek. 28. ver. 17. 18. And thus Job, bemoaning himself, representeth his misery, *He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes*, Job. 30. 19.

Ashes were used; under the Law, in way of humiliation, upon occasions of sadness by affliction. Thus they did both put ashes upon their head, and sit down in ashes (as Job. ch. 28.) wallowing therein, Jer. 6. 26. covering themselves therewith, or rolling themselves therein, Lam. 3. 16. Yea they did eat ashes, as the Church, complains, Psal. 102. 9. *I have eaten ashes like bread*. But the ashes under the Law were typical, whereas the ashes wherein they lye (the ashes wherewith they are deformed) are their own ashes, from the fierce burning of

the Lord upon them. The Lord hath burnt up all about them, all upon them, all in them; all their life, all his own life, &c. so that there is no beauty left in them, nothing but *ashes*. But Christ, when he comes, will take away these *ashes*; and cause a fresh life, with the beauty thereof, to break forth upon them.

The oyl of joy for mourning.

The Seed of Christ cannot now rejoyce, they can do nothing but mourn. If they *prophecy*, if they speak of the things of life, yet *it is* but in *sackcloth*. All the life of God that is left in them, is under an herse and administers matter of mourning. But Christ will take away their mourning, and give them *the oyl of joy* in stead of it. He wil give them that which shall cause them to rejoyce, that which shall kindle and feed joy in them, even that oil, wherewith he that is anointed cannot but truly rejoyce. Alas, We say to one another, *Rejoyce in the Lord*; but how can he truly rejoyce, who hath mourning appointed him? He that hath cut out the times and seasons, hath made this a season of sorrow. *The world shall rejoyce* (saith Christ) *but ye shall be sorrowful* (ye shall weep and lament) *but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail, bath sorrow because her hour is come.* Ioh. 16. 20. 21. It is your time of travail, your hour of misery and sorrow is come. It is not now the time for *the oyl of joy*; but for the spirit of mourning. If ye will rejoyce, it must be from your own oil; for his oil of joy, the oil of his spirit, is not yet powred forth. Indeed the Disciples had a tast of it, upon Christs former coming, and they could rejoyce: but that is gone, and distress, sadness, and mourning is to make way for his second coming, as it did for his first; yea, and that distress and sadness is to be greater then that which made way for his first; as this coming of his is to be greater, with greater life, with greater redemption, and with
more

more abundant oil of joy. Alack, alack, how grievously are persons mistaken. *The flesh would faine get up into that appearance of life, the truth whereof the Apostles lived in: but God hath sunk the truth, the substance, the life, the spirit, it self into that death which flesh abhorreth, and cannot but avoid,* and yet there alone is it to be found.

The oyl of joy for mourning.

There is a oil of joy. *There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.* There is light, there is life, there is redemption, how far distant soever at present it seem from them to whom it belongeth. (Things are never the lets for mens not seeing them or not thinking them to be. But this oil of joy is reserved for Christ to bring with him, and dispense among his mourners, for he is to beautify the spirits of those who are till then to lye deformed in and with ashes. *And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoyce, and your joy no man taketh from you,* Joh. 16. 22.

The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

The Lord will cloath them with life and salvation. There is now nothing but an heavy spirit within, and heaviness round about. All their motions, all their enjoyments, their praying, their prophesying, their testifying of God or any of his truths, all is in sadness, anguish and distress of spirit. But Christ will take away this heavy spirit, and fill them with life and joy within, yea and cause that joy to break forth also without. For in stead of this heavy oppressed spirit, which hee will remove from them, he will bestow upon them *the garments of praise.* Their very garment shall deserve praise, shall draw forth praise, shall fill their own spirits with praise, yea and all that see it shall acknowledg it to be praisable. Indeed the garment, wherewith the spirit is now clothed, is filthy and loathsome: As it was said of Christ, *He hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him,*

there is no beauty that we should desire him: so may it be said of the seed, their flesh (the flesh wherewith their spirits are cloathed) is more unlovely then the flesh of the rest of the world. But Christ, when he comes, he will say, Take away this heavy spirit from within, and Take away the filthy garments from without (as the Angel said concerning Joshua, Zech. 3. 4.) and give unto my people cheerful spirits, and the wedding garment, the garment of joy and praise.

That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.

The Lord will have the excellency of his people owned by the world, and enjoyed by themselves. They are now *trees of righteousness, trees of the Lords planting*, but alas, who would look upon them as such! But when the Lord brings them forth and makes them appear like themselves, then every one will be ready to acknowledge them. When God puts upon them the garment of righteousness, then they will appear to have been trees of righteousness of his own plantation.

That he might be glorified.

Their present condition, together with their relation to the Lord, and what the Lord hath promised concerning them, is a shame to the Lord. The present lamentable condition of his *Israel*, is his disgrace and reproach. To behold those who are so near to the Lord, concerning whom he hath spoken such great things, in whom is the very life and nature of the Lord himself, I say, to see those lye in such a sad condition, even beneath the rate at which the wisdom and providence of man maintains man, what a disparagement must this needs be to him? The Lord hath promised them that he will be *their God*, that he will spare no wisdom, no love, no power, no bowels which may advance or any way advantage them: and yet, notwithstanding all this, in what

what a loathsome condition do they lye ? Now, what a dishonour is this unto him ? The Lord cannot but lye under a very great reproach, while they lye in misery and desolation. Why therefore will the Lord rowl away all their shame and misery, and bring them forth like his own seed, like trees of righteousness of his own planting, that he may vindicate his own glory, *that he might be glorified.* He will do it that he may recover his name among his own people, Isa. 52. ver. 5. 6. and also among his enemies, Ezek. 36. 20. before both whom it suffers very deeply upon his ground and occasion, as may be seen in these last-cited Scriptures.

T H E
SWEET INVITATION,
Reproof, and ~~direction~~ of Christ
to wandering souls.

I s A. 55. VER. 1. 2. 3.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight it self in fatness.

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

BEfore I observe any thing out of these words, it may seem necessary to enquire who it is that speaks them?

The very doctrine and manner of speech wil discover the preacher. This is no other then the voice of Christ to his poor desolate people, alluring them from al their broken cisterns to the true spring and fountain of life. He knows

knows the sweetness of the waters which spring up in him, he knows the goodness, the substantialness of this bread, and therefore doth he commend it to the tast of those that stand in need of it. *If any man thirst* (saith Christ) *let him come unto me, and drink*, Joh. 7. 37. And again, *Let him that is a thirst come: and who ever will, let him take the water of life freely*. Yea Christ commends his bread and his water, to quicken his peoples appetites after them. *My flesh* (saith he) *is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*. He that eateth of my bread, eats the bread of life; and he that drinks of my waters, shall receive a fountain of waters (yea of living waters) into himself: *Who so ever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*, Joh. 4. 14. And again, *He that beleeveth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*, Joh. 7. 38.

Having thus briefly made way, I come now to some observations upon the first verie, for I shall not treat of that any otherwise then by way of observing some few things from it.

VER. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.*

OBSERV. 1. *There are waters* (soul-waters, spirit-waters) *for the people of God*. As God hath his creation, his land, his earth, besides this visible world: so he hath waters to water his land with, to water every creature in the new creation withal. And these waters have the properties of water, and produce the effects of water in their own kind: They are sweet, they are cooling, they

they are cleansing, &c. They have these properties, and they effect these kinds of things. All the properties and effects of water may be applied unto them, but by way of instance, I shall mention only two properties and three effects.

The two properties are these, They are *cleer* and *living*. They are *cleer* as *Christal*, and they are *waters of life*, living streams, as lively as that which is nothing but spirit. They perfectly quicken every thing that they come neer. There is *the very life and light of God* in them, and that very fully, even enough to enable them to drown all the darkness and death they can meet with. Both the properties are mentioned in that one place, *Rev. 22. 1. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, cleer as Christal, proceeding out of the Throne of God, and of the Lamb.*

The three effects are these, They are *moistening*, *healing*, and *causing to fructifie and flourish*. The land of God is now like a desert, but these waters will moisten it: *Jerusalem* is now sick and diseased, but these waters will heal her: *The womb of Jerusalem* is now barren, but these waters will make it very fruitfull: Nay *Jerusalem* is like a *dry-stick*, and her off-spring like so many *dry bones*, but these waters will make her *green, fresh, and flourishing*, see *Isa. ch. 35. ver. 6. 7.* yea I might add this also, these waters will make her sad heart rejoyce, as ver. 1. of that ch. and *Ps. 46. 4. There is a river, the streams whereof shal make glad the city of God.* This is the first thing to be observed, namely, that *there are such waters*. As certainly as there are waters in this earth, which the sensible eyes of our flesh see: so certainly are there also waters, of their own kind, for the earth of God.

Observe. 2. *There is a thirst in the people of God, after these waters.* The people of God can as ill subsist without these

these waters, as elementary bodies can without elementary waters. Their nature needeth them, their soul longeth after them. *Christ, David, and all that are of the Spirit of God, thirst after the Spirit of God: My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.* There is in them, both a need and a sense of that need (unless in cases of deep sickness, where the sense is vitiated, or in cases of great extremity, where the sense comes to be quite lost for a season.) The empty spirit of man can take up with any thing almost: but the soul of the seed can be satisfied with nothing but these waters. Their very nature thirsteth (as the nature of the creature doth in the like case) when it wants them. *As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* Their nature calleth for them, as the very parched ground doth for refreshing showres and floods.

Obsev. 3. That there is for the present (and so hath been all along) *a great separation between these waters and (and the people of God) these thirsty souls.* The waters yet have not overtaken them, nor have they as yet been able to come to the waters. All the people of God have been but travellers toward the light, toward the life of God; they have none of them been possessed of it. All the calls of God hitherto to them have been but to seek out the waters, to set their faces toward the light and life of God; but they have not been able to reach to them. But there is a time when the Spirit of the Lord will not say any longer, **SEEK THE WATERS,** but **COME TO THE WATERS.** *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.*

Obsev. 4. *The fulness, the abundant vertue of these waters.* They contain in them all that the soul thirsty after God can desire. Ther's *meat*, ther's *wine*, and ther's *milk*. Is thy stomach vast and strong, able to digest the very God-head? ther's meat will suit thee.

blow

H h h

Come,

Come, buy and eat. Is thy spirit so spent with longing and seeking after God, that thou art not now able to feed on him, if thou mightst meet with him? ther's *wine* sufficient to refresh and keep up thy fainting spirits, and to make thee able to receive and enjoy him. Is thy stomach weak, so that thou needest gentle and yet good nourishment too? ther's *milk*. There is that in God which will satisfy every estate and condition of the life of his spirit in his people, in the day that these waters shall spring up and break forth.

Observ. 5. *That the dispensation of this life is free. Whosoever is a thirst, let him take of the water of life freely.* This fountain (the great fountain of life) is open to all whose palates are prepared by God to tast of it. There is a kind of bartering here in this world for vanity, for that which is worth nothing; but the great and excellent riches of God are freely dispenced. There is a poor knowledg of man which man trucks for, which man travels after; There is a truth which man buyes: but the great, the rich, the precious knowledg of God only flowes from the fountain. *The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Men labour in the fire for very vanity:* Its worth nothing that which they travel for: but the true waters, the excellent waters, they flow and cover Gods earth of themselves. Nay this world, this earth, the common spirit of man; That which they shall have of God, their light, their knowledg, it shall nor be attained by their pains, but shall overflow too: (For this earth is to have somewhat in the great day of Gods bounty: When God visits his own earth, they are to have some light, some life, some tast, some discoveries of God: why these shall likewise flow in upon them.) Their light shall be kindled from some flashings of light through his people. *His lightnings shall enlighten the world.* The light which the world

world shall have in this kind, shall not be from any thing which they can raise up, but from Gods letting out of his light upon them. He shall set up a light in his people which shall lighten all the earth, though not equally with them.

There was a tast of this given upon the first coming of Christ: For all that had money (all that had any knowledge, any righteousness, &c.) were then thrust by; but those that were poor, naked in spirit; sinful, de-seased, &c. upon them did these waters flow. It will be a terrible thing to be rich, when the dispensation of life comes. Wo then to them that are rich in religion, rich in performances, rich in duties, rich in obedience, rich in faith. *When the son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?* The life of God in the seed shall be so destitute, when Christ comes to visit it, that it shall have no life but what Christ brings with him. When Christ hath visited them, then ye shall see the glory and power of that faith and love (and of all spiritual excellency) which lay hid in them: but these are so dead, so buried, so lost, that until the coming of Christ they cannot be found. And that in this kind which is already found, is of such a nature, of such a stamp, such a kind of *mine*, as will not pass in that market. The Lord will do a wonderful work at the appearing of his son; He will turn by all that have *money*, all that have *price*; and they alone shall *buy* that have no money. And this will cleerly distinguish the seed from all others, for there are none but have some kind of money or other, but they: And then they will see, how hardly the Lord hath dealt with them, in stripping them so perfectly against this day.

VER. 2. *wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

THE children, the seed, the thirsting seed, they have their money, and they take pains for vanity as well as others. They also are trading and trafficking here in the empty forms of Religion, seeking that there which is not in them. They spend all they have many times upon the wrong Physician, yea they waste all their strength and livelihood to purchase the wrong field, that in which *the treasure is not. It is not bread*, and will not serve the turn in their spirits, it will not satisfy. (They are fain to reason themselves into, and take up with an imaginary satisfaction, but they do not find a real supply and satisfaction to the nature of their spirits.) And what now can all their meat be but poor, lean, scragling food, which hath no sweetness, no nourishment, no true pleasantness, no substance in it; (indeed *it is not bread*) and consequently all their growth is flashy and spurious. They may swell hereby in the bulky appearance of the flesh, but they cannot possibly thrive by this kind of food in the truth, weight, and substance of the spirit. So that notwithstanding their multiplying store of this kind of food unto themselves, and their abundant feeding upon it and growth by it, yet they are *not satisfied*. They are hungry still, they are thirsty still, there is somewhat else they want, this is not food. *He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst more.* True water of life will quench the true thirst of life: but that which the spirit of man, yea or the seed, purchase with their money, will not do it.

There are some indeed who have no money, as ver. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and*
he

he that hath no money: And some are so broken, as they cannot labour: so distressed, as they know not how to wait. When the soul is pinched with extremity of hunger and thirst, it is to little purpose for others to persuade it to wait, or for it self to think of waiting. It most naturally sinks, and faints, and cannot do otherwise in this condition. Indeed it is a very lamentable condition, when (on the hand) there is no way but waiting, and yet (on the other hand) the pain and weakness is so great, that the soul cannot wait.

But it is not so with the generality of the seed, but they may commonly be found here under dark dispensations, in a dark way, busying themselves about vanity with the rest of the world. The seed of God and the seed of man are so jumbled together in this world, that they cannot be distinguished, neither in themselves, nor in their waies, nor in their motions: but the world is both breaking into the Church, and the Church is breaking out into the world, whereby both do so meet and mingle together that they cannot be separated. That which the world is most entertained with (I mean the serious, the religious part thereof) is about laying out their *money*, about improving their *labour* and pains in Religion. And thus it is with the seed likewise, they are wondrously serious, hoping to purchase some great matter, and attain some great satisfaction by a faithful employing of all their advantages, and of the strength of their spirits. But alas poor souls! The Lord, who both knows what things are, and observes what they do, tells them that they are mistaken. This which they are so eager after, and would think themselves so happy if they might attain, it is not what they take it for, nor will it prove so useful to them as they expect: it is not *bread*, it will not *satisfy*. It is a question, whether ever they shall have what they seek, or no? But if they should meet

with it, it will not answer their desires ; it will not yeild that nourishment, that satisfaction to them which they expected from it : *wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?*

Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight it self in fatness.

It is from hearkening to the voice of their own spirits, and not to the voice of the Lord, that his children come to lay out their mony and pains about vanity. The Lord indeed speaks otherwise in their spirits, giving them many hints that this which they seek is of no value, is not the thing it self : yea they have many qualms upon their consciences, many secret touches in their souls, which if they did give ear unto, would speak more and more plainly, and lead them out of this gawdy path of vanity and deceit, wherein they are now captivated.

Indeed while there is a root of flesh in the people of God, while they are rich and strong, while they have mony in their purses, and can take pains, they cannot for their hearts hearken to the Lord, but must needs be trucking with the stock which they have. But while it is thus they will be hunger-starved, they will meet with but froth, but husks to feed on. But when the Lord hath perfectly turned the spirits of his people to himself, when the sheep come indeed to know and hear the *voice of the shepherd*, then will they follow him into that rich pasture, into which he doth most naturally, and into which he alone can lead and guid them.

Christ is the holy one of God ; the way, the truth, and the life, or the true and living way, he deceaveth not, and he that hearkeneth unto him cannot err. It is not his spirit that leadeth men into these vain (though glorious) by-paths, but it is the dark spirit, clothed with the appearance of his glorious light, and meeting with the
nature

nature and root of delusion which is already in the heart, which leadeth man (and the seed too, so far as they give ear thereto) awry. But who so heareth and followeth the voice and guidance of Christ, will meet with good food, satisfying food, pleasing and fattening food : *Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight it self in fatness.* Observe hence these few things.

Observ. 1. There is good food, there is fat nourishment, which the people of God may meet with by the direction and guidance of God: There was good food for them under the Law in their dispensation, and good food also for them under the Gospel in their dispensation. God, who is good, hath appointed that which is good for every thing in their place and state.

Observ. 2. The people of God seldom meet with that which is good and satisfactory, with that which is truly delightful and pleasant in any dispensation. They may be tickled for a season, and feed very pleasantly in a dream; but when they awake they find their bellies empty, and their hunger remaining. In that God invites them here to it, he doth imply that they had not met with it.

Observ. 3. He that will meet with the good of any dispensation, must walk very closely with God in that dispensation: He must *hearken diligently*; he must be very attentive to the voice of God therein, and not give any ear to the voice of man, to the voice of his own fleshly spirit, or to Satan.

VER. 3. *Encline your ear and come unto me.*

EVEN the very children of God turn from their God, when he speaks not that which suits with their spirits. He that hath any riches of knowledg in himself, any

any understanding or will of his own, cannot purely and nakedly hear and receive the will and pleasure of the Lord: He cannot encline his ear to his voice, nor come at his call. For if the Lord speaks that which falls not in with his understanding, he runs from him: If the Lords light differ from the mold whereinto he is cast, he cannot receive it; nay he can hardly bear it. The children of God who have any mony are not thoroughly broken, are not meer clay, and so lye not perfectly open to the Lord to be formed by him: so that by their wisdom, by their light, by their mony, by their own life, they miss of the life and wisdom of the Lord.

Encline your ear, and come unto me. The nature of man, as it is now leavened, starts back and runs awry from the nature of God: yea his own joy in every dispensation of life, are never and anon sucking from him into themselves. *My people have committed in evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.* And this is the ground of all their misery, *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee; and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, &c.* Now the reason why the soul is so unkind and unrighteous to God, is because its ear is so open to the flesh, where the misterious path of this loving kindness and goodness is not manifest: but if it were possibly for the soul to give God a fair hearing, if it did but fairly encline its ear to hear, it could not chuse but come to him: yea, and if it would receive no false informations and surmises of the flesh against him, but still wait for the manifestation of his council in the true light, it could never depart from him. *Encline your ear, and come unto me; Give up both your understanding and your will to the monarchy of the purity of my light, and of the truth*

of my love. Do not stop your ears against me, and run to the vanity of your own minds for council, which hath alwaies undone you: but bend your ear to me when I call unto you, and come to me for my advice.

Hear, and your soul shall live.

From hence ariseth the great death in the Spirits of Gods people, because they know not the voice of the Lord, and so cannot hearken unto him, cannot lend their ear to that language, which alone can lead them into life. How can he live, or be happy, whose ears are stopped against those discoveries, and that advice which only can lead him thither! And yet this is usually the estate of the people of God in their dispensations. They know not the Lord; They understand not, but turn from his voice: They look upon his Prophets, upon his light in them, as a peece of delusion. *Israel knoweth not the Lord (The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his masters crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider)* *Israel* hearkeneth not to the voice of the Lord, hereupon *Israel* cannot live the life of his own dispensation, but comes to wither and dye in it. But if the people of God did know the Lord, if they could hear the voice of the Lord, if they durst trust the Lord, if they could follow the Lord, surely he would not fail to lead them, through the wilderness, and through all the powers of death and destruction, safe into the land of life, and they should live. They should meet with an awakened principle of life at their first hearing, which principle should grow with them, and be protected, and guided, until it came perfectly to live in them, and they might

Hear, and your soul shall live.

There is life in the voice of God to his people, and did they receive it, they could not but let in life, Life, peace, rest, blessedness, even that life, that peace, that

rest, that blessedness which their spirits desire, is in the voice of the Lord, is in the word of God, is in his Christ (the great preacher of his Gospel, and the only guide unto his life and bosome) whom they that receive, receive eternal life. The words that Christ speaks, *they are spirit, and they are life*, alwaies quickening, and causing them to live into whom they enter.

And I will make an everlasting covenant with you.

There is a root of love between God and his people, wherein they alwaies meet in perfect oneness, however otherwise they may differ. There is a firm league between their natures, though their natures (and consequently that league which is written therein) may be deeply hid. But yet there is at present so great a distance and variance between these most perfect friends, as that there needs the making of a covenant to reconcile them. There is need of the making up of that breach, which hath been made (and still continueth) between them. We may see plainly that there is a vast difference and great distance, for the one is not inclined toward him (they do not come to him; they do not hear him) nor doth he let down his life upon them, as is partly expressed and partly implied in the former words, and may abundantly be observed in the whole course of both those great dispensations of God, viz. that of the Law, and that likewise of the Gospel.

I will make. God hath talked of this covenant, and represented shadows of it, yea and hath given taste of it to his people under their several dispensations, but he hath not yet made it. But when the heart and spirit of his people is purely turned toward him, then will he make this covenant. When that part of the covenant breaketh forth in them, which sets them right, then shall that part of the covenant break forth upon them, which shall fill them with all that their spirits can desire.

or delight in: For first God will turn them unto him, and then he will open and let out his life upon them. The Lord will never let out his life upon his people, while they live upon themselves, upon life in themselves, or while they think to attain it by any price or pains: But when the Lord hath stirred up that principle in them, whose nature it is to thrust out self; when the Lord hath so exercised, battered, broken, stripped, and emptied their spirits, that he hath made them clay, pure clay, meer clay; then will the Lord begin to form them, then will the Lord raise up and bring forth this life in them, and establish his covenant with them.

An everlasting covenant. This covenant is everlasting, of a nature that changeth not. The separation, the division between God and his people is but for a time; but the union, communion, and mutual enjoyment is everlasting: From an *everlasting root*, by the hands of an *everlasting Priest*, through an *everlasting covenant*: Which covenant is not according to the Law of any carnal dispensation, but according to the nature and power of life, and of that spirit of love, which alwaies resideth in the heart of God toward his people.

Even the sure mercies of David.

Mercy is proper for them that are in misery. There is all of God in the covenant, but the first thing that springs up is mercy. As their present estate and condition first requireth that: so that first answers it.

Mercies: All the mercies that are comprehended in the covenant, all the mercies that they need, for they are both equal, God having so ordered, both that they shall need all, and that they shall have all. All that is in God is fitted both to the nature and state of the seed, and there is that in the seed which calleth for all that is in God, even all his love, all his power, all his wisdom, all his mercy, &c.

Mercies of David. What were the mercies of *David*? *David* was raised out of a low condition, redeemed from all his troubles, afflictions and enemies, set upon the throne and maintained in the throne against all opposition. All this *David*, the type, had from mercy: yea and *Christ*, the substance, had so too; and therefore he praiseth and acknowledgeth mercy, Psal. 22. and elsewhere. *Righteous Christ* liveth himself, and hath life for all his seed, from mercy, as he confesseth, Psal. 22. ver. 22. &c. What these mercies are, may also be seen in Psal. 89. The presence of God with them in their death, together with his raising of them from thence unto perfect life, are the chief thereof.

And these mercies are *sure*. Sure to *David*, sure to *Christ*, sure to all the *Seed*. They depend upon the nature of God, upon the original love of God; They are in the very root of his will (as I may so say) yea they are his will. The nature, life, and happiness of the seed, is written in the nature, life, and happiness of God: and therefore all their mercies must needs be very sure, being locked up in the nature and being of God, their God.

TH

THE
Sweetness, Goodness, and Kindness
OF
GODS NATURE,
with its great efficacy in the day of
his Power.

PSAL. 36. VER. 7. 8. 9.

How excellent is thy loving kindnesse, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

They shal be abundantly satisfied with the fatnesse of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

For with thee is the Fountain of life: in thy light shal we see light.



Ere are several things spoken by way of prophecy, concerning the nature, motions, and influence of the heart of God toward the sons of men (which is to appear in due time) with the interchangeable effects that issue therefrom.

I. Here is the sweet nature of the kindness of God

set out by way of admiration, *How excellent, &c.* It is not directly described, but wondered at by the Spirit of Christ himself (for this is his voice in the Spirit of David): The Spirit entering into Christ, dwelling in Christ, speaking from Christ cannot but admire the excellency of the nature of God, and the wonderful sweetness of it. So abundantly full and rich is God in his universal goodness, kindness, and tenderness, that he astonisheth the very eye and heart of Christ.

2. Here is the effect of this upon those to whom it is discovered, *therefore the children of men put their trust, &c.* Those who see it break forth in any dispensation, cannot but trust it therein: Those who see it unveiled, cannot but perfectly be molded into it for ever. It bespeaks confidence, it draws confidence where ever it appears. It is such an argument, such a ground of confidence, as every one cannot but acknowledge. There is now no drawing of men to trust God, why? Because he is not known: but whensoever he opens himself, there will be no keeping of men from trusting of him; but they will flee as swiftly to him for shelter from their misery, as Noah's Doves did to the Ark for safety from the overflowing waters: *Where are the fowls that fly as a cloud, and as the Doves to their windows? Isa. 60. ver. 8.*

3. Here is the fruit of this trust or confidence, which is abundant satisfaction from the house of God. God doth not use to fail those that run to him, & rely upon him, but tenders & makes much of them: *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.* God is the great master of the great family of heaven and earth, *God shall be a house for all his family, for all his sons, for all his servants.* And when he comes once to make himself known to them, and to beget in them trust toward him, he will satisfy them all; he will then let out the sweetness, the fulness, the fatness of his house upon them; he will then feed

feed them with the best of his house, with the fatness of his house. And they shall not only tast thereof, and so long for more, but be satisfied with it. Neither shall it be a mean or poor satisfaction (such an one as men are fain to call so for want of a better) but true satisfaction, full satisfaction, abundant satisfaction, *They shall be abundantly satisfied, &c.* Yea yet further.

And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

God hath a river wherein he takes wonderful delight, a river of pure pleasure, a river of the pleasure of God, a river so rich, so sweet, as that it can delight God himself. Now what is this, but his own spirit? Of this water of that very river shall the children of men drink with God, and take in the same delight with him. God will make an enduring feast of life to his whole creation. God will make his whole family capable of, yea, and cause them to enjoy the same pleasure of life and blessedness with himself. So that there shall be no more need to say, *Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest.* The water of life shall overflow them all. His own spirit, all which are enlightened, and believe, shall receive and enjoy. There was a tast or shadow of it once given, but it shall one day be done in full truth and perfection.

4. Here is the ground of this great bounty of God, *for with thee is the Fountain of Life*, which implicth two things.

First, a fulness or ability in God to do it. God is able to maintain his house at this rate. He hath a fountain of life, a fountain of satisfaction, a fountain of pleasure; and therefore he need not be sparing of it. Yea *the fountain*, that from which the highest kind of life springs, that from which all life springs, is with him, so that he may well let his creature or household drink of the water of

of life. He, being the Fountain, may well let out a river, and give to his family to drink of. He is more able to make precious life abound in his Kingdom, then ever *Solomon* was to make silver and gold abound in his Kingdom.

Secondly, the naturalness of it. It is natural to a fountain to spring forth, to run abroad, to disperse and communicate it self. Why God, having the fountain of life, it must needs be proper to him (if he had but the common nature of other things) to dispense that life. God, who is pleased with a bountiful dispensation of things in his creatures, who would not have them forget to *do good, and communicate*, surely he himself will not forget to let out and communicate his own life, so far as it will go.

5. Here is the rest and satisfaction of the Spirit of Christ and his Seed, in their present estate, hereupon: *in thy light shal we see light*. We are now dead, we are now dark, we now know not the way to the presence and Spirit of our God, (nor have any further communion and acquaintance with him, then according as he now and then of himself pleaseth to descend upon us and bubble up in us :) but we shall one day live in the life of God, we shall one day see in the light of God. The very nature of the God-head, the fulness of the God-head shall enter into us, and become our own. In the light of God, in the nature of God, in the fountain of his own being shall we see, know, and enjoy himself. This is the happiness, which Christ and his seed promise to themselves.

VER. 7. *How excellent is thy loving kindness; O God!*

K*indness* is an inclination or propensity to do good. The proneness of any nature to do good in any kind,

kind, is its kindness: To do much good in many kinds, shews the largeness of its nature: To do all good in all kinds, argues the universality of its nature. Now this doubtless must bee in God: Surely there cannot any good appear or be supposed to be, which is not be found in him, who is the Foundation of all we are or think.

But there is yet more then thus in the kindness of God. There is an excellency of nature in it beyond what we know, or can imagin. It is such a kindness as is peculiar to God: it hath such a nature in it, as every thing in him hath. As his wisdom is of a different strain from any wisdom which we are acquainted with: As his love is of a peculiar nature, differing in kind from all the shadows which represent it: So also is his kindness.

Thy kindness. Every thing that is good hath kindness in it: and not only kindness in general, but its own particular nature and vein of kindness. Various things have their various kinds (as the common creatures, angels, men:); yea those that agree in the same common nature, have a distinct peculiarity of their own; so that they are as truly different from, as well as one with the things of the same kind with themselves. Every seed hath that in it, which maketh it it self and not another. It is very like the other, but not the same. Every mans wisdom, love, kindness, &c. is peculiar. Men differ as wel in the form, aspect, and qualities of their souls, as in the visage and lineaments of their bodies.

Now as all things differ from one another, so doth God much more from all: His kindness doth not only exceed in degree, but is of a distinct nature from all kindness else. All things in God are distinct and vastly different from all things else. Whatsoever is in God, is not the same with that which is in any common creature: No not the same with that which is in Christ himself. Take Christ as he is the instrumental root of the crea-

tion, he is distinct from God. All that originality of creaturely wisdom, power, love, &c. which is to be found in him (and which springs from him into the creatures) it is but the image of him who formed it: not it self the same thing with the substance, though by perfect union and inhabitation of the substance it becomes the same. Now that which is made the same by union and universal communication, is not the same originally. But it would be too intricate and perplexed a task in this dark light (and especially to do it to these dark ears) to explain and manifest how Christ is one with the Father, and yet distinct from the Father: how he is the first-begotten of the Father, the first-born of all creation (and so really partaketh with them) and yet one and the same with the Father himself: nor would it be altogether proper in this place.

How excellent! Of what a rare nature is thy kindness, O God! how attractive! how alluring! how ravishing! Who can open, who can express the nature of thy kindness! Who can tell the pureness, the sweetness, the fullness, the intensiveness, the extensiveness of the nature of thy kindness! We may perhaps taste it, and wonder at it, but we can never understand it, we can never comprehend it, until we become perfectly one with it, until we be stretched out by the utmost power of eternal life, and become even as large as it.

Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

The children of men are in a weary land, in a scorching and tempestuous country, in a city closely besieged and scanty of provision: They want shade, they want shelter, they want rescue, they want relief. The enemy persecuteth them, yea hath seized upon their life, and is devouring it. Their precious soul is daily hunted for and taken. They are made very miserable by enemies,

enemies, and dangers, both within and without them; which though few at present discern particularly, yet it is so plainly written in the state of all men, that he that runs may read it. For what man can flye from the death and misery of his body? Or what man can endure or escape the pains of the death of his soul? O how will men cry to the mountains to fall on them, and to the rocks to cover them, when once their misery approacheth. Surely, surely very precious will a shelter be in the day of calamity.

Now, God hath wings, such wings as cast a shadow sufficient to shelter the sons of men from all misery. They are a proper help, a proper relief from sin, from death, from hell; from whatsoever can affright or afflict poor miserable man. They can cover man, and keep him secure from all that can disturb him. And when man once comes to be sensible of this, to understand his own need, the suitableness of this remedy for him, and the great kindness of God in affording it him, he will speedily resort unto it. *Therefore do the children of men, &c.*

Therefore. Because of thy kindness, because of the excellency of thy kindness, because of the openness of thy nature to that which is miserable, and which none can help. There is that in the nature of God which (were it discovered to them) the whole creation could not but trust, only it is hid from their eyes, which necessitateth for the present this course of misery.

The creation sensibly wants somewhat to run to, somewhat to lean upon; and mourns within it self, not knowing which way to turn. It cannot find any thing large enough to receive in its misery: it cannot find any thing wise enough to understand it, or able enough to relieve it: which makes it, in all its pangs and seekings out for help, to start back and chuse the weight of its own misery, rather than a deceitful remedy.

But now, if God were once opened to the creature, If the true nature and heart of God were seen and felt by the creature; there it would find what to rely upon, there it could not but rowl it self and find rescue.

We have a tast of this even in dispensations. Those who have a true sence and relish of God there, how naturally do they run to him! how sweetly do they lean upon him! how contentedly do they give themselves up to him! how little do they fear harm by him; how strongly do they hope for preservation, guidance, satisfaction, and all good from him! And yet this their knowledge of him is but a shadow, a flower of the present dispensation, which passeth away and cannot abide, further then it is comprehended and receiveth a new life and being afterward.

Therefore. Because of the excellency of its nature, because the children of men see the truth and fulnesse of this kindnesse, they see it to be such, as that it is impossible for it to refuse the relief of any thing that runneth to it (*him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out*) therefore do they seek shelter under it, and with confidence repose their weary souls there. Indeed if it were but a kindness of man, though raised to never so great a degree, there were not sufficient ground to trust it: We trust those whom we account good men, meerly through ignorance and necessity, because we know them not, because we have nothing better to trust: And we do not heartily trust them, nor cannot, because we see that they have not a bottom to receive our confidence: Nay the very nature of *Adam*, were it extant in its purity, were not to be trusted: for that which hath failed may fail again, that which hath failed God may also fail man. So that if the wisdom of God, if the love of God, if the kindness of God were of no deeper a dye then mans, man could not understandingly trust it (and he doth not truly

truly trust, who doth not fully trust, who doth not trust with his whole soul, who could not trust if he understood himself.) But such is the nature of God, that were it but known; it could not but be trusted: So kind is God, that the greatest sinner, who is most obnoxious to him, did he but know him, would not fear to put himself into his hands. No sinner can fear Hell, who knoweth the nature of God, and what every thing must needs be which cometh from him, and is done by him. Yet let not vain, foolish, carnal man abuse this to his own ruine, for the true fear of God (yea even of Hel) ariseth from the true light of God, and is not to be removed or mitigated by any imaginary notions or conceptions of the creature: and yet this is also true, the quickest flames of Hel cannot hurt the enlightened sinner. It is darkness makes Hel dreadful, but the Spirit of *David* can understandingly say, *If I descend into Hel, thou art there*: and as no darkness can hide any thing from God, so neither from that Spirit which is enlightened by him. God is greatly to be feared in every dispensation, where he is so high above, and so terrible to the creature: but not at all in the inmost of his own nature, where he is one with it, and as perfectly kind unto it as to himself. There he fulfils *the Royal Law*, He loves his neighbour, the creature as himself. It is only the dark, black, hideous vail of God (which the necessity of the present estate of things puts upon him) which makes him so terrible to all flesh.

VER. 8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*

Every creature, both in Heaven and Earth, belongs to the family of God, and his house, is able to con-

tain them all. It is said of Christ, that of him *the whole family in Heaven and earth is named*, Ephes. 3. 15. And he himself saith of his Fathers house, that in it there are *many mansions*.

God keeps several Houses. In every dispensation he hath an House, which is suited to his family in that dispensation. But besides these petty houses, he hath his great house into which he gathers all, even that which was out cast from any of those other houses. And this house cannot spare any thing, this house is not complete if any thing be wanting: it cannot miss the most dishonorable and refuse vessel of any other dispensation, but it hath both place for it and use of it. *In a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth: and some to honour, and some to dishonour,* 2 Tim. 2. 20.

In this house, as in all his other, God takes care of his whole family, providing food, rayment, lodging, and every thing necessary for them: He provides for every thing according to its proper nature, place, estate, and degree. He keeps a rich table of far satisfying food, even food that satisfyeth himself, food that maketh and keepeth even his own spirit and life hearty. And he hath rich pleasure too, a river of pure delight, a river all the streams whereof yeild perfect delight, perfect content, whereof he himself drinks continually. This same rich food, this same pure water doth he not grudge to all his family, but he satisfyeth the delight of his nature in distribution and communications. In every dispensation his whole family faces like himself, *(as he is, so are we in this world, saith John, 1 Joh. 4. 17.)* but here, as there is more perfect unity, so there will be more perfect community. Thus, thus shall all that are of this family be provided for. They shall have abundantly satisfactory food, and perfectly pleasant drink. But this will chiefly

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(if not onely) extend to the first fruits of the creation at first (for there is yet to be a greater separation then ever yet hath been, even that whereof the separations hitherto have been but tips and shadows.) God will first give a taste of himself what he is, what he means to be, before he poureth out himself universally. That which hath suffered with him, is first to reign with him; and that which hath been an enemy to him, must dy by his hand, that death he hath spoken of. Now how these things can be, may seem very difficult and contradictory, (if not altogether impossible) to the narrow spirit of man, but are very easy and manifest to the enlightened nature of life. And if man could once strive less to see with these eyes, and pray heartily (for that which he accounts hearty praying, is not the truth) for the true eye and the true anointing, the intricate stridles in this kind might readily open to him, but in the way that he seeketh to see and know he cannot truly either see or know any thing of God: but this onely by the way.

Qn. But what part of the creation, what part of Gods family (both in the first fruits and in the crop) is this satisfaction intended to?

Ans. They are here expressed, who are principally meant, viz. *the children of men.* The rest of the creation may feed with them and drink with them, but the chief satisfaction, the chief draught of pleasure is intended for them. *They shall be abundantly satisfied, &c. and thou shalt make them drink.*

Gods chief business in reference to this world, hath still been about the children of men. His delight was with the sons of men, before this world was made: And when this world was made, all that was made, was made for them. Yea, when they were dashed in pieces, the whole creation was broken with them: And when they are restored and advanced to an higher estate, the whole creation

tion shall be restored and advanced with them. The creature shall be taken into their liberty, when they are made sons; that they may be fit companions and servants for them.

But yet; not the children of men simply considered, but the children of men *believing*, the children of men that *put their trust under the shadow of his wings*. As faith is sown and springs up in them, so shall the fulness and sweetness of God grow upon them. Those of them that are taught to shelter themselves under God, shall be relieved and satisfied by God. The children of men are to remain cast off by God, until the nature of God spring up in them, and break forth from them: but when they are taught by that to know and trust God, then are they to see, taste, and feel what he is. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* Observe hence these two things.

Observ. 1. Such is the kindness of God, such is the kindness of his heart and nature, that he can never leave till he hath brought the children of men into the possession of his own fulness. There is a kindness in the nature of God toward the nature of the creature, which will spring up (it cannot but have a time to spring up and manifest it self) let it be buried under never so many thousand dismal dispensations. A kind heart is never at quiet till it hath imparted all: And as God hath more fulness than any thing else, and therefore is not so easily emptied; so he hath more kindness also, and therefore is less at rest till he hath emptied himself. His spirit is the sensible spirit, the grieved spirit, the mourning spirit in one sense; though in another sense he is also (all the while) imperfect rest.

Observ. 2. Faith is the inlet into the fulness and sweetness of God. What will not a kind-hearted man do for him

him that trusts him: The kindness of God cannot suffer him to withhold any thing from them that rely upon him. It is not for nothing that life, salvation, and blessedness is so often promised to them that believe, for it is the true and proper inlet. The reason whereof is because of its nature: For it is not only an ordinance and institution of God, but it hath also its foundation both in the nature of God and of his seed. It is the natural motion of the seed toward God, which the nature of God cannot but answer. He who is of God cannot but rowl himself upon God for deliverance, for salvation, for fulnes and satisfaction: and God cannot possibly fail him. The nature of God engageth God to save and fill him, as his nature engageth him to run to, and rely upon God for it.

VER. 9. For with thee is the fountain of life.

THERE is life, there is true life in God. That is not vanity or a meer imagination, which the spirit of Christ in the seed pants after, but there really is such a thing in being. There is such food, there is a river of such pleasures as their souls desire satisfaction with.

Not is there only the nature of this life, but there is also the fulnes of it. There is not only the thing they desire, but there is likewise as much of it as they can desire; There is a fountain of it, There is that which can cause it to spring up, yea which can bring it forth, be it never so fast devoured and swallowed up. There is such a fountain, which can feed such a river (with all the streams thereof) as is requisite perfectly to please God, and his whole seed, yea and the whole creation also, for ever.

And this fountain is where they would have it. This fountain of life is in God. *With thee is the fountain of life.* That God from whom the seed came, and after whom the seed hankers, hath the fountain of this life by him. 'Tis with him, 'Tis in his possession, 'Tis at his dispose, yea 'tis in him, and from him it flows.

For with thee is the fountain of life.

For, or therefore will the Lord satisfy all his seed, because he hath the fountain of all their life. He hath the fountain of that life from whence their being sprang. Surely it is just with God to dispense of that, whereof he hath the fountain, to them to whom it is proper. Food of life, streams of life belong to them who have that kind of life in them. If God hath begotten in the creation (or in any part of it) the same life with himself, it becometh him to feed and cherish it with the same meat, and with the same drink. If he feed on Christ, they must feed with him: if he feed on himself, they must feed on him also. There is nothing which his nature can desire, but their nature will desire the same, and cannot be satisfied without it. Is it not just with him to satisfy them, as well as to satisfy himself, he having the fountain of their life and delight, as well as of his own, after which they do as truly and naturally hunger as himself, and which doth of right belong to them as to himself, they being of the same nature with him?

In thy light shall we see light.

The Spirit of Christ concludeth it, the Spirit of Christ in the seed knows it to be so, and therefore is not afraid to speak it, through fear of being disappointed, because it is sure of it. It beleeves, and therefore it speaks, *in thy light shall we see light.* We shall live at the fountain, we shall eat at the Lords table in his own house, we shall drink of the river of his pleasures: The truth and certainty

rainty whereof it appeals to God concerning, Lord thou knowest that *in thy light we shall see light.*

In thy light. God is light, and in him is no darknesse, There is no true light any where but in God. All other light comes out of darkness, and is mixed with darkness, and is still darkness more then light. Take the greatest light in the greatest dispensation (that which causeth the clearest and most perfect sight) it is but darkness, and will be dispelled and vanish when the light of God breaketh forth. It is but light comparatively, in respect of thicker darkness, not light absolutely. The clearest eye is but a dark eye, and the clearest light afforded it to see by, is but a dark light. It is not the light of the Lord, that light which is peculiar to the Lord, the naked light of the Lord, that light wherein the Lord seeth and perceiveth into all things; but it is light veiled, and refracted by the clouds wherein it is wrapped, which is done on purpose to darken it, and make it fit for this dark eye in this dark state; which requireth the veil or cover to be very thick, but the light it self to be very final. *The darkness and the light are both alike to thee,* saith the Psalmist. Mark, Such is the light of the Lord, that all other light and darkness are of no consideration before him. He sees ne'er the more for the one, nor the less for the other. The darkness clouds not before him, nor doth the light cast any brightness there. All the blacknesse of darkness and all the brightness of light equally passeth away in his presence. His light enlighteneth the darkness, and is not at all enlightened by the light, but is faine to enlighten it also. The eye of the Lord can see no more in the light, then in the dark: If his own light were put out, there is no other light wherein his eye could see at all. And this is the light wherein Christ and his Seed also assure themselves to see, when

they are exalted to behold the open face of God.

Shall we see light. That which God seeth is light. (That which the creature seeth, is but the vail, or at most the God-head as the vail representeth it.) As he seeth in his own light, so he seeth nothing but his own light. The Lord is so full of himself, and so filleth all with himself, that he knoweth nothing but himself. All the empty flashy considerations of the creature vanish before him, and they appear only in that fulness which they have and are in God. If a man could, in the light of God, behold *all the nations of the circle of the earth*, at first dash they would appear but like *grasshoppers*, nay but *as a drop of a bucket*: nay that would not last long neither, but they would immediately be *as nothing*, and would be counted to him *less then nothing and vanity*. In the light of the Lord there is no sight, no knowledg, no mention of any thing but the light of the Lord. What room or place is there in that eye which is filled with God, to behold or make any thing of the creature? And this is true sight: Alas! all the sight we have of things is no sight, it is only such a sight as a man may have in the dark. We do not see the thing it self, we do not see light, nor do we see in the light: But when we come to the house of God, to the river of God, to the fountain of life, then shall we see light: and we shall see it there where it only is to be seen, namely, in the light: *In thy light shall we see light.*

Observ. That *the Seed of God shall most certain'y see light in the light of God*. It is the Spirit of Christ (which cannot be deceived) which speaks here in the name of the seed. God, who is the Fountain, cannot alwaies hide himself from them but must at length by a kind of natural necessity let out his life upon them, and then they shall see and enjoy what they desire, even light in the light

light of God. For a little further illustration of this three things would be inquired into. First, *what light is?* Secondly, *what light is this light in?* Thirdly, *what is it to see light here?*

Quest. 1. *What light is?*

Ans. It is hard to say what the commonest light is, and therefore it must needs be much harder to say what the light of God is. Our best knowledge of it is not by any accurate artificial description, but by our own sensible experience, where we find a kind of demonstration both what it is and what it does.

Now this we know concerning light, that it is of a clear pure nature, and hath answerable effects; viz. of clearing and purifying. *Darkness* defileth; it draweth blackness over things, it maketh them black and dark like it self, though it also hideth this from them: but light discovereth and purifieth. Light without discovereth things, and light let in purifieth them. Light also warmeth and comforteth: for light hath heat in it. *Darkness* is dismal, cold, and comfortless; but light is not so.

This is an image or shadow of the light of the Lord. The light of the Lord is a clear, a pure light indeed: so clear, so pure as nothing can approach it, nothing can stand before it. The Lord dwelleth in light inaccessible, which never any eye saw or came neer; but his own. It can shine about and comprehend every thing, but nothing can come neer it.

And it is a *cleansing light*, a *purifying light*. It can cleanse, nay it cannot but cleanse the deepest pollution. O how deep is the filth of spirits, and yet it can perfectly cleanse them. Where ever it shineth, it discovereth all filth: (All pollution is manifest in this light) and where ever it enters, it purgeth it out.

It is also *exceeding comfortable*. The perfect consolation of the perfectly desolate lieth in it. None so low as Christ and his seed: None so comfortless in their misery, in their death, in their darkness: and yet none so full of comfort as they are in the light of the Lord. O how sweetly, how wonderfully, how compleatly it warms and revives their frozen spirits! This light is comely, and it is indeed a pleasant thing to the eye of Christ and his Seed, to behold this Sun.

Qu. 2. *What light in this light is?*

Ans. Every thing is excellent in God. O how pure, how perfect is every thing in the fountain! (There is no slime, no mud, no filth of any dispensation.) Light is the most excellent thing here, and it doth not lose its excellency there. Every thing is perfect therewith the perfection of its own kind (for the difference of kinds cannot be destroyed there, from whence they did arise) how excellent then is light there! Spiritual light in the fountain of light, how excellent is it? The light of sense, the light of reason, O how pure, how perfect are they there! Yea but what is Spiritual light there? Surely it is so full, so compleat, so perfect, as to be able to turn every thing into it self: Every thing shall be light in this light, for those that are taken into it shall see every thing, and yet they shall see nothing but light, *even the night* (the darkest night) *shall be light about them. In thy light shall we see light.*

Qu. 3. *What it is to see light here?*

Ans. It is the act of the eye of the Spirit, letting in this light universally, or beholding every thing in this light: for this light there shineth about every thing, and every thing there is in this light, yea the light it self is in every thing: so that he that seeth this light, seeth every thing; and he that seeth any thing

thing there, sees this light. It is the perfect fruits enjoying perfectly its perfection in the primarily original and absolutely perfect root. Or its enjoying both it self in the root, and the root in it self. To see light in the light of God, requires the eye of God; for none can see that light, but that eye: yea it requires the natural strength of his spirit; for none can feed that eye with its proper vigor, but his own Spirit. To see light in the light of God argues perfect communion, which flows only from perfect union. They must bee perfectly one with God in the root (and so throughout) who are capable of this in the extent, say in the nature of it.

A Taste of the Breathing, Pantings, Waitings, and Hopes of Israel after the true Saviour, and his effectual Redemption.

PSALM 85.

Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land, thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people: thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

Turn us, O God of our salvation: and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

Shew us thy mercy, O Lord; and grant us thy salvation.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his Saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from Heaven.

Yea the Lord shal give that which is good; and our land shall yeeld her increase.

Righteousness shal go before him: and shal set us in the way of his steps.



His Psalm was penned, by the Spirit of prophesy, concerning the future estate of the people of God, whom this people of the Jews were chosen by God, as a tipe, to represent and shadow out. The Spirit of Christ, in David, openeth here the course of the Spirit of the Lord with his people.

The people of the Lord are those whom he sets himself about to redeem, whom he brings out of *the land of Egypt with a strong hand*, whom he seats and settles in *Canaan*, his own Land. Yet afterwards he turns the eye of his favour both from his land and from his people, emptying the land of his people, and carrying them into captivity. This is plainly intimated vers. 1.

The people of the Lord are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. *The Lord seeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor sin in Israel.* He pardons all the sins he finds upon them at first, and washes away all the sins which grow upon them afterward, with the blood of his sacrificed flesh. Other mens sins lye open, but the sins of Gods people are expiated and covered. But before the captivity of Jacob, the iniquity and sin of Jacob is again opened, which the forgiving and covering again afterward doth cleerly intimate, vers. 2.

The people of the Lord are the fruit of his love, they spring out of the loins of his love; He chose them because he loved them, and he encompasseth them with his love: His anger, his wrath, his fury is for his enemies; but his love, his sweetnesse, his kindnesse is for them. And yet the Lord, after the embraces of his love,

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hath a part to act upon his people, wherein he lets forth all his wrath, even in the heat and extremity of it, in the very fierceness of it, as is intimated vers. 3.

These things are only intimated: but now *Christ* (or the Spirit of *Christ* in *David*) beholds al this blown over; beholds the favour of God arising again upon his land, and the captivity of Jacob brought back. Al the misery, which the land and people of God are brought unto by the hiding of his ey, is presently remedied by the opening of his eye again upon them. Let God but look with an eye of favour upon them, and he cannot forbear redeeming of them. *Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob,* vers. 1.

He beholdeth likewise their iniquity forgiven, and their sin covered. *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin,* vers. 2. When God turns toward his people in love, there are none of their sins can turn his heart from them, or hinder the course of it: but his love findeth such pardon, and such a covering for their sins, as that their sins can be found no more. *In those daies, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shal be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shal not be found: for I wil pardon them whom I reserve,* Jerem. 50. ver. 20.

He beholdeth also (which necessarily ensueth upon the former) all wrath and fierceness of anger removed. *Thou hast taken away al thy wrath: thou hast turned from the fierceness of thine anger,* vers. 3. This was not then really transacted, no nor yet is not: but the Spirit of *David* had a sight of this in the nature of the Lord. He saw the heart of God, in the Spirit of the Lord, and in it the course of God also with his people, wherein God followeth the dictates of his heart and nature. Therefore he (in their spirit, or they in his Spirit) begins to pray
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for it, verſ. 4. *Turn us, O God of our ſalvation, and cauſe thine anger towards us to ceaſe.* For this is the true root and encouragement of prayer, it drawes us on in, and with the Spirit of the Lord. Our ſpirits being touched with the Spirit of the Lord, fall in and joyn in our deſires with his motions: And when we once ſee what the Lord will do, then we pray with life and vigour.

Turn us, O God of our ſalvation, and cauſe thine anger towards us to ceaſe.

The people of God both turn and are turned from God: They turn themſelves from God, and God turns them from himſelf. So answerably, in due ſeaſon, God turns them back again, and their Spirits turn again towards him. Anger ceaſeth, and love ſpringeth up in him, and from him entereth into them, and all is healed. The Church, in her Spirit, knoweth the courſe of theſe things, and therefore ſpeaks underſtandingly, not according to the fooliſhneſſe of the fleſh, but according to the wiſdom of the Spirit, *Turn us, O God of our ſalvation, &c.*

O God of our ſalvation. Our life, our redemption, our return lies in thee. Thou art the God of it. From thee it ſprang, and in thee alone it lives. Thou alone canſt begin it, thou alone canſt carry it on, thou alone canſt perfect it. *Turn us, O God:* The work will never go on, while our hearts ſtand at any diſtance from thee, *O turn us. And cauſe thine anger ceaſe.* Remove that which kindles thine anger, and take away thine anger too. Take us out of our unlovely poſture, and take alſo thine anger away from us.

VER. 5. *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*

O Lord, how long haſt thou been angry with us?

Through how many generations hast thou drawn out the line of thine anger all a long ! How hast thou continued our captivity and our bonds upon us through many generations ! O how long have thy people been stripped of the free Spirit of the Lord ! of the life of the Lord ! of the light of the Lord ! How long have they been kept out of the land of the living , and captived in a strange land ! Shall this remain for ever ? Wilt thou never cause this cloud of anger to pass away ? Shall God and his people continue at this distance , throughout all the ages and generations of mankind ?

V E R. 6. *Wilt thou not revive us again : that thy people may rejoyce in thee ?*

Shall we alwaies lye thus dead and stripped of al our life, for want of the Spirit of the Lord, and never be any more quickened ? Shall thy people never bless thee more ? Shall *thanksgiving and the voice of melody* be no more heard in thy holy land ! The dead cannot praise thee , The sons of Sion cannot sing the song of their God in a strange land ; There hath been long and sad experience of this. The dead must needs be far from bringing forth such vigorous motions of life : but revive thy people , and then they will sing thy praise, and please and delight themselves in their God. *Wilt thou not revive us again : that thy people may rejoyce in thee.*

It is the most natural thing, the most delightful thing, for the people of God to rejoyce in God. God is the Fountain of joy ; and whom should he fill with it ; but his people ? And whom should his people breath it into again , but him ? This posture God delights to have them in , This posture ~~they delight to be in~~ : but this cannot be in that estate of death and captivity , wherein God for a long season shutteth them up. *The living,*
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the living shall praise thee, but alas, the dead cannot.

VER. 7. *Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.*

There are two things which the people of God both need and desire in their misery, his mercy and his strength: the kindling of his bowels, and the exercising of the arm of his salvation. Both these are hid from them in their captivity: They can see no mercy in him toward them, (*where is thy Zeal? Where is the sounding of thy bowels? Are they restrained?*) nor they can see no salvation: There are bonds, death, captivity, destruction, but no salvation. But yet these they still breath after, *O open thy mercy, and open our eyes that we may see it; O let out thy salvation upon us, thou God of our salvation.*

VER. 8. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his Saints: and they shall not return to folly.*

Here is the temper of this awakened soul, with the ground thereof, and with the effect of that ground. His temper is to wait for the voice of God: It doth not hastily run after the imaginations of the fleshly mind, but it waiteth for the manifestation of his counsel (which fleshly *Israel* never did, nor could do, *Psal.* 106. ver. 13.) The ground of this waiting is very firm, it is from its knowledg of God, and that good will which he beareth to his people according to his word, which cannot but at length cause peace to issue out unto them. Which peace, or that life and power, which issueth out from God into them with that peace, will preserve them from sin and vanity for evermore.

His temper is an hearkening or listening after the motions of God, *I will hear what God the Lord will speak.* He hath put up his request, and now saith he, I will watch which way God will move, which way the Spirit of God will begin to work. This is the most quieting course the spirit of the child can take: for let it hear any thing else, it shall be sure to hear to its own discomfort, prejudice, or danger; (whereof it hath had many sad experiments in the time of its sickness and distress.) There is a time of estrangement between God and his people, wherein both the Lords tongue is silent, and their ear is also deaf, in which time the soul runs wandering up and down, courting every thing for relief, (*They have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place,* Jerem. 50. ver. 6.) But there is a time, even in the midst of this misery, when God beginneth again to touch the soul with the sense of himself; and then the soul gives over this distempered chase, shutting its ear against every thing but God. Indeed it is many times the condition of the soul in its captivity, in its death, in its exile from God (which ariseth not from its nature, but from the extremity of its present estate) namely to shut its ear against God, and to open it to any thing else rather. This ariseth from the darkness and anguish of its present calamity, wherein it heareth no news of God, but in such a riddle as it understandeth not. But when it once comes again to be touched with his spirit and life, it immediately turns from all things toward him, shutting its ear against every thing else, and opening it only to him. It regards not what all men say, what all Angels or Spirits say, nay not what its own spirit saith; but thus it concludeth within it self, *I wil bearken what God the Lord wil speak, and I wil never beleve any thing til I hear his voice.*

The ground of this is from his knowledg of the na-

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ture of God, *for he wil speak peace unto his people, and so his Saints.* The Lord alone can, and the Lord certainly will speak peace to his people. All the troubles of Gods people are but to prepare their ears for the sweet musick of peace, and he that hath troubled them will certainly give them rest. *Peace* (true peace) floweth only from God. Peace is happiness: The peace of every nature is the happiness of every nature: All misery lieth in trouble: That is not an affliction which doth not trouble, or at least which soweth not the seed of trouble. In peace there is comprehended perfect deliverance, perfect salvation, perfect life, perfect communion with God, yea there must all things necessarily be found, without which this peace cannot be. Now all this God will speak, or all this God will do, but for whom? *He wil speak peace unto his people.* The people of God are only for God, and God is only for them: *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me,* saith Christ. *There is no peace to the wicked,* saith my God. And to his Saints, or to those whom he is kind to by his grace, to those whom he maketh holy by the favour of his life toward them: to them will he assuredly speak peace, and their troubled souls shall hear his voice and be at rest.

The effect of this peace will be, *and they shal not return to folly.* When God speaks peace, life, redemption to his people, to his Saints, it wil be like himself, perfect; and there can be no return to that from which they are redeemed. Indeed in these dark & shadowy redemptions, there is stil a return to folly; and so there is stil a return of wrath, of death, of captivity: but after the perfect redemption of the seed from their great captivity, there shall be no more return to the least folly, but perfect life, wisdom, and holiness shall flow from God into them, and back again from them into God for evermore. It is true, now there is no degree of life, no degree of peace, but
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it is soon over-born: Be mens spirits wound up never so high, and never so much changed in communion with God, yet presently they return to their own vanity. What sort of men have not cause to complain and bemoan themselves, saying? *Our goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away:* all our good desires and intentions, which arise from our best and most settled temper, soon perish. Look on man in every dispensation, this may be easily read in him. *Adam being in honour lodged not a night, but became like the beasts that perish*, he presently turned fool. The *Jews*, how continually were they returning to folly; read but any of the Prophets, and behold the backsliding nature of their spirits! Nay the *Christians*, how soon did they turn from the wisdom of the Spirit of Christ, into the folly and vanity of their own flesh! What marvel is it then if persons now a daies, do so quickly slide back from any spiritual impressions, into the weakness and sinfulness of the flesh. But when God once speaks peace after this rate (that is thoroughly and perfectly) *his people, his Saints* shall be perfectly redeemed from their folly, so as they shall return no more unto it.

V. E. R. 9. *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.*

This is the voice of the Spirit of Christ concerning his own (as yet unredeemed) people. There is a land which the Lord hath destined to them for their inheritance: This is their land. And this land is *the glory of all lands* (as *Canaan*, the tipe thereof, was, *Ezek. 20. 6.*) though its glory be now eclipsed, and it lye like the most desolate wilderness. But when salvation springs up to the seed, the true glory of the inheritance (or of the land of the seed) shall rest upon it; then glory shall take up its residence there. Every thing shall spring forth

in its glory in the land of glory, and glory shall abide when it comes to its own settled habitation. The glory of the seed shall be no more a prey to the enemy, after the day of redemption, but they shall live and enjoy the glory of their land all their dayes. *The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies a cloud, and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon at the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.* When once the salvation of the seed begins, it will begin with power; and nothing will be able to step between them and that life, glory, and blessedness which God hath prepared for them, but they shall receive it fully, and enjoy it without interruption.

Nigh them that fear him. The seed, they are now fearers: They fear the Lord: This is their temper in every dispensation. This was the temper of Christ, Isa. 11. 2. and this is the temper of all the seed. Indeed the sweetness and glory of life belongs to love, but the safety of life, in intervening dispensations, belongs to fear. There was a touch of the glory of life in the Apostles times, and then love did drown fear: but that quickly vanished, and fear took place. And the Apostle Paul advised *the Church at Rome*, if they did desire to continue their standing, *not to be highminded, but fear.* And that this temper hath its proper use to the seed, and is to abide in them til the day of redemption, is directly intimated here, in that it is said, *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him.* The Spirit of Christ describes the seed at the day of their salvation, by this property or temper which the Saviour then shall find them in, *viz. of fearing God.* When they are perfectly saved, fear will be swallowed up by love: but til they are saved, they

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cannot

cannot but fear. The Spirit of life, the nature of their faith begets fear in this state. And salvation is *nigh* to such: so saith the Spirit of Christ, what ever the Spirit of the world, to a mans own Spirit or condition speaks. When a man is once brought truly to fear the Lord, he is in the path of life and salvation, and it also is continually approaching to him, and about the time of its breaking forth (which time *David*, or *Christ in Davids Spirit*, now beholds) it will be very nigh to him, and all such.

VER. 10. *Mercy and truth are met: righteousness and peace have kissed.*

The Prophets eye is upon, and he beginneth to describe that glory, which is to break forth when God shall issue out this salvation.

Mercy, or, kindness and truth are met. They have been alwaies hitherto disjoyned: for if a man be kind, he is commonly hallowhearted: or if he be true and real, he is seldom kind: Rugidness is fain to defend truth: A man is forced to keep his spirit sower, or he cannot keep it pure: Nay God himself is fain to be harsh to his people, or he cannot be true to them: But at this day they meet; Now all the truth and kindness of God meets in, and vents it self upon his people. There is now no kindness but in truth, nor no truth but with perfect kindness, throughout the whole land of God. Perfect reality, perfect sweetness, al the substantial goodness of God unvailed to, and entering into his people, in its own perfect sweetness.

Righteousness and peace have kissed. O at what a distance are righteousness and peace in this world, yea in the several dispensations here! There is no peace in this world to the righteous Spirit of Christ: and he that will

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be righteous with Christ, shall have trouble and perfection enough, but no peace. There is no peace here but to him that walks after the wicked law of the corrupt spirit of man, which is to seek himself, to preserve himself, to exalt himself: for the whole course of man, in all his various motions, is built upon this: yea there is not so much as a law made (which are the most righteous things among men) but is bottomed on this. But now, true righteousness and peace embrace one another: These great strangers are now met. Here in this land is all righteousness, and all peace; but without, there is no righteousness, nor peace. And O how sweet will this meeting be! How pleasant will peace be, when it is full of righteousness! and how jocund righteousness, when it wants no peace!

VER 11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from Heaven.*

There shall be a new Heaven and a new Earth, and they shall both yeild new fruit; the Earth truth, the Heaven righteousness. There shall be no deceitful thing shall spring from Gods earth, nor no unjust thing shall descend from his Heaven. O what deceit springs up in mans earth! even in theirs who call themselves Saints! and O what a deal of unrighteousness looks down from their Heaven! Alas, their Heaven, their Earth, is not the new Heaven and Earth, and cannot bring forth the new fruit! (*Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*) But when God saves his people, he will bring forth the new Heaven and the new Earth in his people, and will also create a new Heaven and Earth for them, in both which shall spring up and look down truth and righteousness. Truth shall shoot up from Earth towards Heaven, & righteousness shall look down from heaven upon earth.

VER. 12. *Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good: and your land shall yeeld her increase.*

Yea this shall be the nature of that state, The Lord shall sow every thing that is excellent in this new Heaven and Earth, and our land shall bring forth all the seed which the Lord soweth. The Lord shall not be sparing, but give every thing that is good (He shall sow all his life, all his blessedness, all his perfection:) and our land shall yeeld up a full increase of all that is sown. It shall bring forth as perfect life, as perfect light as was sown in it: yea, though it was sown but as seed, he shall bring it forth in its own proper and substantial fulness.

VER. 13. *Righteousness shall go before him: and shall set us in the way of his steps.*

In all the things the Lord doth for us and in us, *righteousness shall go before him.* It shall be righteous with him to do all he can for us. Righteousness shall lead him to sow all that he is in us. His righteousness shall cause him to be all that he is in us. In every motion of his toward us, *righteousness shall go before him:* we shall not need to fear any alteration, for he shall do us good from and according to the righteousness of his nature. And the same righteousness shall guide us, and that into his very steps and motions: His righteousness in us shall make us like him, and shall make us act like him: We shall follow him, in every step that he goes, by the same guide which leads himself: It shall be the same principle of life, of righteousness, that shall go before him and cause us to follow him; that shall first lead him on, and then us into the same steps. Plainly thus, It shall be the same Spirit of the Lord wherein we shall meet, whereby we shall live and move: and the same spirit shall guide us into the very same steps and motions, so that we shall be perfectly one, walking in the same path, and doing the same thing.

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THE

Two main Props and Pipes of Faith,
viz.

KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE.

PSAL. 9. VER. 10.

*And they that know thy name wil put their trust in thee: for
thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*

HE *Name* of the Lord, is that
whereby hee is distinguished and
made known: it is the signification
of his nature. And this is the nature
of the Lord, namely, To succour
and releeve every thing that needs
his help: To ruine that which can
live without him, and to refresh that
which is worn out for want of life in him: To bring
down that which is high; and to exalt that which is low:
To make that fall which can stand, live, or prelerve it self
by its own wisdom, or by its own strength; and to raise
that up which is falling, or already sunk, and cannot
be restored but by his hand: To confound that which
hath never so strong a life, which it draweth not from
him, and retaineth not in him; and to raise up that
which

which is fallen never so deep into the clutches of death, yet still looking towards, and leaning upon him.

To know the name of the Lord, is to understand and be sensible of this nature, from his discovery of himself by his name. For thus the Lord maketh his name manifest, namely, by light to the understanding, and by experience to the sense. He that hath the right understanding, the right sense, receiveth and groweth in the knowledge of God, according as it pleaseth God to let into him the right light, and the right experience. The natural man cannot know the Lord, cannot taste the Lord, cannot feel the Lord: but the spiritual man doth know, doth taste and see how good the Lord is. And thus the Lord teacheth his name, viz. by communicating and spreading of his nature in his own seed, and by exercising of that nature in them.

They that know thy name wil put their trust in thee.

They that know the Lord, cannot but trust the Lord, cannot trust any thing but the Lord: They that know not the Lord, can rather trust any thing than the Lord. Man can trust his own wisdom, his own strength, but he cannot trust the Lord: The seed, the new child cannot trust the creature, cannot trust himself, he can trust none but the Lord; and he can never be brought so low, but still in his spirit he leans upon his God. He that doth indeed know the true name of God, the true nature of God, can never be so dashed or confounded, can never be brought to such extremity, as to sever his spirit from his God, but still he abideth with him, and cleaveth to him; though perhaps the outward nature or flesh, wherein hee inhabits, may not be able to perceive it.

For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Them that seek thee. This is the property, and temper of the seed that is born of God, it still seeks God.

Earth

Earth seeks earth, creature seeks creature and creaturely help, delight, and satisfaction: Every thing seeks what it knows: the seed that knows the Lord, seeks the Lord. It seeks union with the Lord, communion with the Lord, help from the Lord, satisfaction from the Lord; It seeks to find its God, and all that it wants in him. This is the whole work of the seed, when once it is born; It seeks its root, its fountain, its original, its God. This is still its posture, this is still its work; and it is as impossible to put it out of this posture, out of this work, as it is to change its nature.

Now these the Lord doth not *forsake*. The Lord accompanieth them, though in strange waies, and so as he cannot be perceived. Indeed the Lord seemeth to remove and estrange himself from nothing more, and that to the very greatest distance, even in the time of their greatest distress: and yet he doth not, he cannot forsake them. He seemed to deal so with Christ, O faith Christ, *Be not far from me, for trouble is near*: and again, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*? And yet he did not, he could not leave him. And thus he seemeth also to deal with the rest of the seed, in so much as they also cry out, *My God hath forgotten me, my God hath forsaken me!* and yet hee can no more leave them, then he did Christ. The truth of this both Christ and his seed will one day confess in a song of praise to God, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation wil I praise thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; al ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, al ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that*
seek

seek him ; your heart shal live for ever. All the ends of the World shal remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nation shall worship before thee, Psal. 22. v. 22. &c.

For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken. Therefore shall thy seed trust thee. The experience of this, and the knowledge of this his nature, doth much encourage them to lean upon him, and to hope in him in the time of their distress, against all the contrary appearances and contradictions of their own reason wisdom, and sense. Now who can from hence learn these two ensuing lessons.

1. To breath after this nature, after this light, after this experience, after this kind of exercise whereby alone God is truly to be known. For from hence must spring desire, seeking, faith, hope, and every thing that is truly spiritual. The old man would fain learn the path of the new man, but he can never find the way into it, nor walk in it: The best course is, not so much to set the old man on work, as to pant and breath for a new man, for a new nature: Not as if the old mans motions or desires do conduce to this, but herein the weak life of the new man commonly first appears, and is hereby cherished, refreshed and increased.

2. To be content to be without this, and to let God form thee to what, and as he pleaseth. Never since man knew what belongeth to any kind of life, could he learn to be meer clay in the hand of God: and yet this kind of knowledge and obedience is better then the best of sacrifices. It is self, for self, which is so desirous of happiness. A pure, a true, a generous, a noble nature, that doth indeed love God more then it self, cannot but chuse the fulfilling of his will before its own. He that knoweth the nature of God, would

would not be any thing but what he of himself pleaseth to make him. Whence is it that I desire to be a vessel of honour, but in reference to self it may be as glorious to God for to make another so: And he loveth not his neighbour as himself, who can be content to have him made so, and not himself: yea and hee truly and radically knoweth not the Lord, who dareth not trust him to make him a vessel of dishonour. These are hard lessons, too hard for poor weak man, But yet the Lord is able to give such an understanding, as may without the least prejudice to it self receive them.


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THE
DISTRESSE & PERPLEXITY
OF
S I O N,

Her fidelity therein, and her faithfull
Comforter and Deliverer, represented
in some observations from
ch. 51. of Isaiah.

I S A. CH. 51.

I.  Bserve the estate and condition of this people, to whom the Lord by this Prophet speaketh in this chapter. Their estate and condition is implicitly, ver. 3. *For the Lord shal comfort Sion: he wil comfort al her wast places, and he wil make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.* Doth not this most plainly signify, that *Sion* was now in a comfortless condition? ful of misery, ful of distress, very much needing comfort, but having no comforter? Her eyes ful of tears, but none to wipe them away? Her heart ful of grief and oppression, but none to mitigate or ease her burthen? She was formerly in a glorious, in a ful condition, but now all is laid *wast*; all her pleasant places, wherein the light of God, the life of God, the

the love of God, the glory of God, the sweetness of God was wont to dwell and shine, and bring forth most precious spiritual fruit, are all waft; every thing ruined, and made desolate. Desolation spread over her outward state, and desolation spread over her inner man, all is become a *wilderness* a *desert*; all barren: barren of all spiritual excellencies, and filled with wild fruit, and wild creatures *lions* and *ojims* dwell there. So that she may well take up the complaint of Naomi, Ruth 1. 16. 21. *And she said unto them, Cal me not Naomi, cal me Marah: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then cal ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

In this condition there is no joy, no gladness, no thanksgiving to be found. Nothing to rejoyce in, nothing to be glad of: No sweetness from God, no thanksgiving to God. That, for which they were wont to bless the name of the Lord, is all stopped and restrained: and their praises also are restrained: for, in this estate of death and misery, there is not, nor cannot be any joyful remembrance of God. God and they are perfect strangers one to the other in all those motions of life, wherein formerly they did so sweetly meet. They cannot rejoyce in any thing present, and the remembrance of former things must needs occasion both trouble and grief. No melody! O what sweet musick were they wont to make in their spirits to the Lord! but now they *hang their harps upon the willows!* They know not how to *sing the Song of their God in a strange land!* They cannot bring forth the musick of *Sion*, in the land of death and darkness.

If this be not enough, look into the 14. verse, where there is some more expressed after the same manner with this here: for thus it is there said, *The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not dye in the*

pit, nor that his bread should fail. They are exiles, banished from the presence of the Lord, from the land of the living, from all the delights they were wont to take there in their God. And not merely banished men, but in captivity also, *the captive exile*, sitting in the dust with hands on the neck (as ch. 52, 2.) and in a pit too, a most dismal prison, and with hardly enough there to sustain life. God will not suffer their bread to fail, Satan may not have power over their life to extinguish it in the seed and root of it; but its whole visibility and sensibility may pass away from the notice and knowledge of flesh, yea even of its own.

Yet once more, they are drunken, stark drunk in their affliction and misery, *but not with wine* ver. 21. that were an easy drunkenness to this: but with the cup of Gods fury, with the dregs of the cup of trembling, ver. 17. God hath a cup that would make the stoutest nature tremble to touch or sip of; they have drunk the dregs of this cup, which hath made their hearts ake, their bowels quiver, and the inmost of their spirits astonished. All the strength of their life, all their light and knowledge of God, hath not been able to uphold them in this day, but they have been thoroughly drunk, and like drunken men have stumbled and fallen, although not so but that they shall rise again (which the fleshly spirit, or the spirit of the world shall not do, when it once falleth.) Though they are his dear people, yet the Lord hath found fault with them, and hath sorely rebuked, and in justice and judgment hath given up the life of their spirits to the grave, at which the spirit of the world laugheth, but they are overwhelmed with pain and anguish. This is the estate and condition of this people, to whom the Lord here speaketh.

2. Observe the pursuit of their spirits in this estate, *They follow after righteousness, they seek the Lord*, ver. 1.

These

These are the two things which were in their eye at first, and they prosecute them still, namely, to have their fill of righteousness and of their God; to have righteousness in their inner man, and God dwelling in that righteous one in them. They seek a lively righteousness, and a living God: They seek the Lord, the light of the Lord, the life of the Lord, the presence of the Lord. This is wonderful indeed, that persons so oppressed, captives, led into such misery, so drunk with the wine of the Lord, should in the midst of all this be following after righteousness, and seeking the Lord; that persons so dead, so slain by the Lord, should put forth such natural and vigorous motions of life: and yet this is the nature and proper course of this life, even in the midst of its death, though, at that time altogether undiscerned by the flesh wherein it dwels. And this they do groundedly, that is, those kind of motions in their spirits have a ground in the nature of their spirits: for they know righteousness (though they know not their own knowledge thereof) and the Law of the Lord, the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is in their hearts, though they in this their darkness, captivity, and misery cannot read it there. But God knoweth what they are, rating and denominating them according thereto, (though they, not knowing themselves, cannot in reason and ingenuity so esteem and value themselves) and he speaketh unto them as such, ver. 7. *Hearken unto me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my Law.*

3. Observe the temper of their spirits in this condition, which is fainting and despairing, as is intimated in Gods endeavouring to raise up their spirits, and keep hope alive in them, ver. 2. *Look unto Abraham your Father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.* Gods proposal of such a mean condition to revive their hope by, doth plainly

intimate how low it was sunk. Yea they utter in their own complaints, *My way is hid from the Lord*, as ch. 40. 27. And again, *The Lord hath forsaken me*, and *my Lord hath forgotten me*, as ch. 49. 14. Yea we need go no further then ver. 20. of this chapt. where God himself bemoans her calamity, saying, *Thy sons have fainted, they lye at the head of al the streets as a wild Bul in a net; they are ful of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God.*

4. And lastly, observe the means which God useth to revive them by. He first cals them to himself, bidding them apply their ears to him, and then speaks comfortable things to them. *Hearken to me*, saith he. ver. 1. Indeed if they hearken to any thing else, there is no ground of hope for them. As there is no possibility of help from any other hand, so no ground of hope from any other voice. Hearken to enemies, to their present condition, to their own sense, to their own despairing spirits, These all joyn together to make them cry out, *We are cut off for our parts.* There is nothing but the arm of God can save, and there is nothing but the voice of God can administer hope of salvation. Now the comfortable things God speaks to them are chiefly these four ensuing.

1. He proposeth to them what a low ebb their root was in, when God first caused it to shoot forth (for *Abraham* was a tipical root) ver. 1. and 2. *Look unto the rock whence ye are hewen, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your Father, and unto Sarah that bare you.* *Abraham* was buried in darkness and idolatry when God first visited him, can ye possibly lye lower? Can ye be remoter from life and salvation then he in that estate? Nay, what a condition were *Abraham* and *Sarah* in, when they brought forth the promised Seed? Were they not altogether incapable in the course

of nature, and according to the eye and judgment of sense and Aeth?

2. He expresseth to them, his resolution, the engagement of his heart and spirit to releev them, ver. 3. *For the Lord wil comfort Zion?* Do not say that *Abraham* and *Sarabs* condition was worse then yours, because of his engagement to them by his promise? For the Lord is as fully (if not far more fully) engaged unto you. That was an outward band (as I may so say) this is the bond of his nature. Therefore be not overborn by sense, which will strive to sink you, telling you that ye are lost, that ye have been so long oppressed, and are still under such power, as there seems no possibility of recovery, so wasted and worn out, that there appears nothing left to be saved. For, for all this, God is resolved to raise his *Sion* out of this low estate. *For the Lord wil comfort Zion*, He wil visit her with life, with redemption, with compleat salvation.

3. He promiseth to give forth and set up those things which are the desire and delight of their hearts, as namely, first his own light, ver. 4. *Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a Law shal proceed from me, and I wil make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.* Secondly, his own righteousness, salvation and power, ver. 5. *My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth; and mine arms shal judg the people: the Isles shal wait upon me, and on mine arms shal they trust.* And thirdly, a new estate of things: He wil make al the old things to vanish away, the old destruction, and the old salvation; both the righteousness and unrighteousness of the old heaven and earth shall pass away: but he will set up a lasting salvation, a lasting righteousness in his new heaven, and in his new earth. So ver. 6. *Lift up your eyes to the Heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the Heavens shal vanish away like smoke, and the earth shal*

shal want old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shal dye in like manner: but my salvation shal be forever, and my righteousness shal not be abolished. Fourthly, he promiset them the removal of the cause of their anguish, pain, and misery for ever, and the return of it into its proper place, ver. 21, 22, 23. Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine. Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury, thou shalt no more drink it again. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee, &c. Lastly (which I cannot but mention, though I have recourse to the beginning of the next chapter for it) he promiset them such a separation, such a pure unmixt communion, as they have so much thirsted after, but could never yet attain, so chap. 52. 1. Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem the holy city: for henceforth there shal no more come into thee the uncircumcised, and the unclean.

4. He opens to them the meaning of all the misery they have undergone, and of Gods stutute dealing with them, ver. 16. And I have put my words in they mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand; that I may plant the Heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and sit unto Zion, Thou art my people. He hath been but a covering them with the shadow of his hand, or with a dark black power of his own, that he might bring about this work. Both the light and darkness of the people of God are the shadow of his hand, wherewith he covereth them within his shop, until he hath formed and fitted them for view. Though his light causeth them to shine, yet it is also a covering and defence unto them, but his darkness removeth them wholly from the sight of flesh.

Now when will the Lord rouse up himself to this?

When

When will his Spirit within him say unto him? *Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient daies, in the generations of old. Art not thou it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the Dragon? Art not thou it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?* ver. 9. 10. Surely he that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the Dragon, he that hath dried up the sea and made a path in the deep, yea he that stretched forth the Heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth (as ver. 13.) surely he could do all this, if he would once please to put his strength to it. Therefore *awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord.* Thy poor people they are in captivity, they are weak, they cannot put on strength: But *O thou the hope of Israel, O thou the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, do thou put on strength. Stir up thy mighty courage, put on thy armour, fortify thy arm, that it may go through this work against all opposition. Sleep no longer, lest thy spouse perish, but awake in the strength of thy might, arise in the fulness of thy power, and come forth with strong light, with strong righteousness, with strong salvation, even such as may chase away all the death, darkness, misery and enemies of thy people, and set them on their legs again.* For then canst thou not fail to bring forth thy righteousness, which shall be for ever, and thy salvation which shall endure from generation to generation, even after the moth and the worm have eaten up man with all his righteousness, ver. 8. Amen.

THE
 PROPER NATURE
 AND
 SWEET BENEFITS
 of Afflictions.

HEB. 12. VER. 11.

Now as chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.



Here are several things held forth concerning affliction, which is the common and constant lot of all the seed. *Chastening* is proper to the state of a child. No sooner doth the child arrive at the capacity of instruction, but he needs correction. We see the shadow of this truth in the state of this World, where the Lord hath ordered and fitted the present estate of man to point out the estate of his child, and his own dealings with it. The Father never lets the child alone, but is still following him with words and blowes, according as the childs need requires, and as his own wisdom dictates.

The Fathers Chastening. 479

afflicts. Thus also the Lord, partly by instructions and partly by corrections, doth nurture up his children in his fear. *If ye desire chastening, God dealeth with you as with us: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons, ver. 7. 8. of this chap.* The considerations which the Apostle here represents to children under the rod, to quiet and comfort their hearts, are these four ensuing.

1. *The nature of afflictions*, they are chastisements; they are chastisements of the Father of Spirits, where-with he chastiseth the Spi^{rit}is of his children. There are *two sorts of afflictions*, viz. *outward*, and *inward*; according to that which is liable to be afflicted, which is both the outward and inward man, and according to this, which is prepared to afflict, which are the world and spiritual enemies, both which set upon both the outward and inward man; the world sets upon both, spiritual enemies set upon both, and many times wound very forcibly by the help of one another. There is also an enemy within us made up of both, viz. our own fleshly spirit, which as it is mighty joined in the time of our life (O how the fleshly spirit makes much of the breathings of life, and rejoiceth in them!) so it is a sore adversary in the time of our death, whispering unto us strange things concerning the life, and putting us upon strange courtesies. Now all these afflictions, all the hatred and persecutions of the world, all the secret conspiracies, yea and all the combats (even the most violent) of our spiritual enemies, with all the treacheries of our own fleshly Spirits, they are all of them the Lords chastenings.

2. *The present face of affliction or chastisement*, it is not joyous, but grievous. Affliction hath no pleasant countenance, but a black, dark, grim visage. What
P p p 2 pleasure

pleasure is there, or can there be to the child in the Fathers correcting of him? To be scorned and persecuted by the world, to be buffeted by spiritual enemies, to be betrayed by ones own flesh, to have ones tender father (in whose sweet and loving countenance lieth the whole life and delight of the soul) to be frowning and striking, there is little matter of pleasure in these. Indeed an ingenuous and understanding child may conclude that there is wisdom, natural affection, fatherly love, &c. in every stroke of every rod, and so may with much quietness and subjection of spirit submit it self thereto: but it is rare to have the child pleased with the rod; nay seldom doth he discern the necessity thereof, but rather thinks that his father might work him to his will by gentler means. Where was there ever any child of God, but thought his chastisement might have been (in many degrees, if not wholly) spared, while it lay upon him? Indeed afterwards they come to see that it was good for them that they were afflicted, but they see it not at present.

The manifest reason whereof is, because affliction commonly toucheth that which they most delight in, and which they most desire to have spared. It reacheth the very darling of their joy and complacency. Hence is that complaint of the soul usual, *if it had been anything but this, I could have borne it!* Now though there be a great deceit in this, yet it is partly true: For God is wise in correcting, and knows where it will pinch, and how to make it smart. We may indeed fancy great things concerning Gods chastisements, and desire to meet with them; and think we can rejoyce in them (and if we truly understood our selves, so we would :) but when God doth indeed afflict, the smart will so pain us, as we should find for the present, little matter of joy, but great, strong, and very sensible matter of grief.

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3. *The sweet end, benefit, and fruit of affliction*: it yeeldeth righteousness, *the fruit of righteousness*, and this fruit peaceable. These great storms, which do stir lusts and corruptions bring forth righteousness; yea, by their thus disquieting and disquieting the soul, they bring forth peace. There is a strange fruit to issue from hence, and surely unless the Physician were very skilful, it could not possibly be produced. There is the greatest contrariety to this, in appearance, that can be: For afflictions stir all the unrighteousness in the soul (that is, if the strokes be hard, if the phisick be very strong) they make the soul abound with humors, they destroy all the peace and rest of the spirit: so that if a man should judge by present sence, he could not but conclude that the whole life of his spirit would be overturned. *Righteousness and peace*, alas they seem far from any possibility of being brought about by this means! Yet this is the way of the father of spirits, to bring forth *the peaceable fruit of righteousness* in the spirits of his children.

4. *The persons who reap this fruit*, which also signifies *the way whereby it is conveyed*. It is to them that are exercised thereby, it is to them that undergo, and pass through the exercise. They that lye in the fire into which the father casts them, until the father takes them out again, they shall be purified. The Lord hath his furnace, and his fire, which is in Zion and Jerusalem, *whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem*, Isa. 31. 9. By this furnace, by this fire doth God cleanse and purify his people, *he purgeth away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and the blood of Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning*, Isa. 4. 4. They therefore who are cast into this fire, and lye there till they are melted, they are changed by it into a new spirit & form of peace and righteousness. They are not they, who as it were break out of the presence of the father, and run away

from the rod, who shall be mended by it: but they who falling far at his feet, stay still by him, undergoing the whole exercise from him. These by the progress, and at the upshot of this exercise, shall be changed into the nature and will of the father, upon which descends, and in which grows up righteousness and peace. To illustrate this yet a little further, I shall propose these two questions. First, what it is that is to be exercised? And secondly, what this exercise is?

Q^y 1. *What is it which is exercised by the chastening hand of God?*

Ans^r. It is the son-like spirit, it is the fathers child. That which the father exerciseth, is the spirit of his son; him it is whom he teacheth obedience by the things which he suffers. The father soweth, and bringeth forth his seed in such a way, as it needeth this; and it is his seed, which he thus exerciseth. God doth not so much regard the spirit of man (though that also feel the exercise) which is but the vessel wherein the seed is, but that which he taketh care to instruct, and to fit for the Kingdom, is his son. He bringeth him forth in a weak, dark estate of life, by the exercise whereof he fitteth him for his Kingdom. He is not fit to rule, who hath not learned to serve: he is not fit to be crowned and exalted, who knoweth not what is, and how to suffer. By afflictions God doth prepare and enlarge, and so qualify the spirit of his son for the Kingdom. *A foals, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* It is as proper, as fit for Christ in this estate and way of life to suffer, as it is for him in his raised estate to ascend and enter into glory.

Q^y 2. *What this exercise is, wherein the father pleaseth to exercise the spirit of his child?*

Ans^r. It is the trial of the seed, the trial of the son.

the trial of his life every way. All the life which the father giveth him, all the life which any way shoots forth in him, it is exercised, to hath its trial. All his faith, all his love, all his obedience, all his humility, meekness, patience, &c. Yea the whole substance of life within, and all the streamings forth of life from him, are tried. Storms, winds, rains, floods, frosts, &c. exercise, try, and nip the whole sap of the tree, even to the very root. More particularly, the seed, or the life in the seed is exercised these five waies.

1. By being hindered in the swiftness of its course. There is nothing both so natural and violent in its course, as the life in the seed, O how swift is it in its return to its center, in its running back toward its father! Let God set or place the life in any dispensation, O with what speed and dexterity doth it run its race through it toward him! Now the cross on the back very much hinders speed: This same exercise, from enemies both without and within, must needs cause going on more slowly, if it will go on safely too; which the wisdom in the seed cannot but desire and mind. While the Israelites were fain to hold a sword in one hand, they could nor build the Temple so fast. He who is himself pursued, hath somewhat more to mind then barely to pursue, and so cannot bend his whole strength that way. So that though there still be a proceeding, yet much of the vigour, and much of the degree will necessarily be abated. Now this is very sore to him, whose spirit is bent wholly to pursue the life and presence of God (in any dispensation, or at the end of any dispensation) thus to be encumbered, thus to have clogs about his heels, enforcing him to walk on heavily.

2. By being stopped in its course. Assaults may be so strong and importunous, as that they may take it up wholly is looking to itself. When it is every way blocked, it can-

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not stir any way but in apparent danger: therefore for that season it is enforced to stand still, and can make no progress. And this is somewhat more afflictive, and oppressive to the spirit of an eager pursuer after God, than the former.

3. By receiving of a fall and wounds. It may be thrown down, it may be battered and bruised. *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him; until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.* Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? Micah. 7. ver. 8, 9, 10. The Church and her seed shall live, and shine in the light and love of God: but in her prosecution of this she may catch a fall, sit in darkness, yea lye buried under Gods indignation.

4. By having its life seized upon. Enemies may proceed so far as to touch and lay hold on the life; yea they may take it, carry it captive, and lead it in triumph. Though the seed in the rebus shall lead captivity captive, yet captivity may have a season of leading; it captive. And is not this a lamentable case; a very dreadful exercise, to have this great life of the soul, this precious life of the seed in the hands of the enemy?

5. They may draw the blood of it. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin:* Opposing of sin against such mighty enemies, may cost you your lives. All the fruit and life of God in you, may be driven back into the seed from which it came; yea and that seed may dye too. And indeed it is the death of that seed; whereby it cometh to live again. It layeth down that life which can be parted with; it giveth up to the enemy that life which may be devoured; and the Lord letteth them

draw

draw the blood of it; and out of that blood springs forth a life which none can touch. This is the great truth of God, and there are tastes of it continually given in all his dispensations: Sweet and precious still is that life, which at any time breaks forth and appears in his people after death, which is a true shadow of that great life which springs from this great, this perfect death.

By way of use or application, take notice of both the wonderful goodnesse and large comprehension of God.

1. *The wonderful goodness of God.* There is sweetness in all his severity and bitternesse. The sharpest correction of his seed, even when it is extended to death, to blood, there is wonderful love and tendernesse in it. His child in this way of bringing forth (and he knoweth what he doth in thus bringing him forth) hath need of all this exercise. And he considers the need of his child, which the longest hidings of his face, his sharpest dealings, his puttings forth of his greatest wrath do never exceed, but he proceedeth still in the depth of his fatherly love, wisdom, and faithfulness.

2. *The large comprehension of God,* which can bring forth so great a life, carry it through so great varieties, in so low an estate, in the midst of such enemies, with so many changes; and yet not step one step awry, but do all understandingly and perfectly.

There are three great things which this points to the consideration of, which it is conversant about. First, there is the seed in the substance of it. Secondly, there is the shadow of the life and course of the seed in various dispensations. Thirdly, there is the shadow of this dispensed life in the world, or in the creature. (There is the substance of life, which is the immortal seed, sown in the Spirit: there is a shadow of this life in the Soul, and in those dispensations under which it is placed or exercised; there is a shadow of this shadow in the body,

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(which is the same with the common part of the creation.)

Now God comprehends all these, the seed in its whole course, the seed (or the spirit of man either) in all dispensations, and the world (or the creature) in all their shadowings out of this: So that nothing befalls the son himself, nothing befalls the son in a dispensation (and so he many times is, who is not the son in truth and substance) nothing befalls the creature, but he weighs and scans. The waies and courses of life and death in them all, are perfectly comprehended and perfectly managed by him. There is not one motion either in heaven or earth, which God cannot give a compleat account of. All the lifes and deaths of the Son in substance, of the Son in dispensations, yea of the most ordinary creature, with the whole course of them, are significant: They are either the thing signified, or the thing signifying. They have their proper use, place, station, though not thoroughly perceived or understood by any thing but God himself. So that God is perfectly wise, and comprehensive in the midst of all the vain estate and course of the creature; where every thing is wholly vain, as it ariseth and is carried on by them, but not at all vain as it is intended, guided, and ordered by him.

THE

THE DESIGN AND WORK OF GOD

in all his dispensations, with a glance
at the mystery of this design
and work.

EZEK. 17. VER. 24.

And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken, and have done it.

FROM these words there are these things following very observable, which I intend first to note out, and then to make some application of, and so to close up with a glance at the mystery.

1. All the estates and conditions of man before the Lord, are but like the estate and condition of trees. Man, every several sort of men, an whole Kingdom, an whole commonweal, with all the affairs therein both of a common nature and of religion, is but like one tree. God is the *Planter*, and man the *clay*: The several sorts of men,

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are

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are

are but several kinds of clay for the potter to form his vessels out of. *Israel* it self, though a peculiar kind of clay is still but clay. He is the Creatour, and they his creature. *It is he that hath made us, and not we our selves,* in our highest estate and elevation in religion. Man in any condition hath no more influence upon God, then the clay upon the potter. Take man wherever you find him, in what condition soever, yet still he is but a creature, and God is the former of him. Indeed in reference to things here below in this inferiour world, man is somebody; Somebody in reference to other things, somebody in reference to other persons, some body in reference to himself (for he, in a sence, is the worker of his own wo or happ.nesse:) But 'tis not so with God: ascend but a little higher, all this vanisheth, and alas he is but clay. This great Engineer, this great potter is himself but mettall. His whole being with all the qualifications thereof, the faculties of his mind, his will, understanding, &c. the most lively and operative things in him, yea his very religious principle and power is but clay. It is true of *Israel*, even in the neerest and most inward sence, *Thou art the Potter, and we the clay:* for the highest and the most spiritual *Israel* is but the work of his hands.

2. The Lord ordereth all these trees himself: He planteth, he watereth, he plucketh up, he withereth, he doth what he will with them. It is the Lord that ordereth all nations and estates of men throughout the world. The affairs of this world seem to be managed by men, by the passions, affections, and lusts of men, by poor inferiour secondary causes and influences springing from man: but the truth is, they are ordered by the Lord, *God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another, Psal. 75. 5. I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, &c.* All the whole earth,

earth, with all estates and conditions in it, with the whole plantation of it, is the Lords forrests; and every tree in it is his: And the Lord hath as free and as full dispose of these, as any man could possibly have of the trees of his orchard. *The earth is the Lords, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell thereof,* Psal. 24. 1. and may not the Lord do with his own as he pleaseth? He that hath the most natural, the most original, the most entire property and command, shall he alone be stinced in the dispose of that which is thus compleatly his own?

3. The Lord hath a strange way of ordering his trees, clean contrary to what the spirit of man would do, and clean contrary to what the trees expect from him: *He bringeth down the high tree, exalteth the low tree, drieth up the green tree, and maketh the dry tree to flourish.* This is the whole course of God in his dispensations: When a tree is *high*, then is the Lords time to bring it down; and when a tree is *low*, then is the Lords time to raise and exalt it: when a tree is perfectly *dry*, then is the Lords time to quicken it; and when a tree is perfectly *green*, then is the Lords season to draw the veil of death over it: When a thing is grown to perfection of life, then is the time for it to begin to return to death; and when a thing is thoroughly dead, then cometh a new season of its reviving. Successions of life and death run through all the parts of this earth. It is the whole work of God to quicken and to kill, to lift up and throw down. And that he kills which is quick, and that he quickens which is slain, that he lifts up which is down, and that he throws down which is lifted up.

4. The Lord hath seasons of doing this so visibly, as to make it universally taken notice of; *And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord, &c.* The Lord hath especial administrations toward his church and people,

which he doth publicly in the view of the world. Their life, and their death, their planting and their plucking up, he transacteth in the sight of Heaven and earth. How famous was his raising up of that nation of the *Jews* out of *Egypt*, and his planting of them in *Canaan*! How famous were his alter dealings with them, and especially that their great death and captivity, when he brake them in pieces, and scattered them among all lands and countries! How famous was his planting of his Gospel Church, and also his breaking of that life again in pieces! The Lord generally manageth the affairs of this world so as he himself is not taken notice of: Most changes men seem to make, and not God: But yet there are some especial passages toward his people, or in reference to his people, which he manageth so evidently, even to mans eye, that his finger cannot but be seen therein.

5. The Lord declareth and doth his pleasure both in the world and among his people. The Lord both speaketh, and doth. He foretels his mind, and he brings about what he foretels. *I the Lord have spoken, and have done it.* *To speak*, is to declare aforehand what one will do; to express ones mind outwardly: *To do*, is to effect, or bring to pass what one hath spoken: And indeed a man hardly ever doth that, which there is not some outward signification of before, which is a plain or manifest voice or speech to him that is able to hear and understand it. *Speaking*, is a property of the tongue: *Effecting*, of the hand. The Lord who made both the tongue and the hand, hath the vertue of both in him; and he maketh use of both in his administrations, for he both speaketh and doth.

The Lord in all his dispensations *speaketh*. He speaketh in his *Creatures*, he speaketh in his *Scriptures*, he speaketh in his *Providences*, even in the most common

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Every mercy, every judgment, every affliction, every season, it is the voice of God: it speaks the power of God, the righteousness of God, the nature of God, the richness and efficacy of his life and wisdom. Rain, fruitful seasons, barren seasons, &c. all things carry a voice of God in them, and are as so many testimonies to the world concerning him; so the Apostle argues speaking concerning *the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. Who in ages past, suffered all nations to walk in their own waies. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladnesse, Act. 14. ver. 15. 16. 17.* And so again, God speaks once, yea twice, man will not hear, at last, he speaks lowder in another kind of language, he opens the ear by affliction, and saith, *Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it.*

And *the Lord doth.* He effecteth what he speaketh: He bringeth to pass what he promiseth, what he threatneth, what he foretelleth either in the nature of things, or by any especial way of providence. *Your fathers, where are they? And the Prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the Prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our waies, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us, Zech. 1. ver. 5. 6.* Every word of God is tried; The Lord speaketh nothing that is vain or empty, like foolish man, but it is all compleat and substantial, like the fountain from whence it springs.

Use 1. See, O all sorts of persons, how perfectly ye are in the Lords hands, what right he hath to dispose of you. Ye are his trees, He may plant you where he will, and deal with you as he will: He may dung and water you, or he may chuse: He may tran'plant or pluck you up

up when he will, and he may cast you into the fire when he hath done, and who can say unto him what dost thou? May he not do what he will with his own? Shall the tree say to the Gardiner or Husbandman, why hast thou planted me here? Or why dost thou pluch me up? Or why dost thou transplant me?

Use 2. If this be the Lords course, to bring down the high tree, and exalt the low tree, &c. then see what to expect from him. If ye be the Lords trees, if ye be under his hand, ye may tast of his variety. Ye can have no life so sweet, but death may overtake it, no death so bitter, but ye may live again. Ye cannot be exalted so high, but ye may be thrown down as low: (If ye be mounted up as high as Heaven in the Angelicalnesse of your life, ye may be brought as low as hel in the blackness of your death.) Nor can ye lye so low, but ye may be raised again as high: yea this is the very method which God useth, namely to throw down the high, and raise up the low. Therefore rejoyce not in your height, in the height of your mountain, for it may be shaken: neither be overmuch dejected in your lowness, as if there were no hope; for the Lord throweth down nothing so low, but he can rear it up again.

Use 3. Consider which is the better estate, the estate of life or death, the estate of exaltation or humiliation: Since the one makes way for and terminates in the other, which is better? Doubtless they are both good in their kind; the one for enjoyment, the other for expectation: yet the estate of death hath the preheminance in two respects.

First, it is better to have good to come, then evil. It is better to have evil present, and good to arise out of it and ensue; then good present, and evil to ensue. It is better to be passing from misery to happiness, then from happiness to misery: better to be low and rising, then high and falling.

Secondly,

Secondly, Because the estate of death advanceth to an higher degree of life, then the life before enjoyed was; whereas the estate of life doth but make way for a deeper death. The death which overtakes and overcomes life, is stronger then it: but the life which ariseth out of the ashes of death, must needs be stronger, both then the life which went before, and then the death which it self overcame and sprang out of. If it had not been stronger then death, death would have still kept it down; and therefore it must needs be also stronger then that foregoing life, which death overcame. So that, in both these respects, it is better to dye then to live: because by death good is coming, and a greater good then was ever yet known or tasted by him whose lot it is to dye.

Use 4. It hints unto us, or gives us an incling of a secret excellency in every thing, and in every estate and condition of every thing. The Lord is excellent, and so is every thing that cometh out of his hands. He is excellent in forming all his clay, there is a stamp of his glory on all his trees: There is not the worst wild tree in all his forrest (much lets in his garden) but his excellent wisdom brought it forth, placed it there, and ordereth it there. *The Lord made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of wrath:* The Lord is excellent in his wrath, and excellent in forming the wicked for the day of it. It is no smal honour to the vessel of dishonour, that it is for the use of the Lord himself. *The Lord made all things for himself (of him, and for him are all things)* the very wicked is not excepted; nay lest he might seem excluded, he is particularly instantiated in, *even the wicked:* But yet do not mistake, and hereupon magnify the estate of the wicked in a fleshly sense, or after a fleshly manner, for the Lord did not make him for a vessel of pleasure, but only for a vessel

of wrath. The Lord will never express any pleasure in him, he shall never hold any pleasure, but only wrath, that he is formed to, that he is fitted for, and that is the service which he is to do the Lord. So that though the wicked be evil in himself, in his own nature and course, yet he is good in his use and serviceableness to the Lord, and the Lord is wise and good in forming him unto this use. Many things are evil (nay what is not evil in its present station?) but yet look upon any thing as it is from the Lord, and for the Lord, and so it cannot but be good. The best thing is bad out of his hand, and the worst thing is good in his hand.

Use 5. For exhortation to every thing to be content with its place and portion. There is ground of discontent to every thing, as it is in it self; but ground of content to every thing, as it is for, and in, and from the Lord. Who would refuse, if he wanted not understanding, to be the worst of his clay, and for the worst use? To be a tree of the Forrest, or a wild tree bearing wild fruit, and to have his end to be burned? I had rather be disposed of by the Lord to death and misery, then dispose of my self to life and happiness. I would not refuse any estate wherein he sets me, nor any end to which he guides me. As I have a distinct understanding, will, and choice of mine own, so I cannot but desire and chuse that which I my self account good for me: but as I came from, and am wrapped up in the will and pleasure of the Lord, and feel the sweetness and excellency of that; so I cannot but prefer any dispose by that, beyond the greatest good which I can chuse. I would not be wicked, nor would I be miserable: yet had I rather be either of these from his will, and by his hand, then never so righteous and happy by mine own. And so far as my spirit is naturally and in truth formed into this, I am apt to conceive that so far I am taught
by

by him the vertue and power of true resignation.

For a close, let me give a glance or touch at the mystery of this place. *And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish.* I shall point at the mystery in these three steps or gradations. There is the seed of man and of the Serpent, and the seed of God: In the Seed of God, there is the Natural Seed and the Spiritual Seed: In the Spiritual Seed, there is the first and second birth, or the fleshly and Spiritual bringing forth of it. These are the trees here, under this metaphor or disguise, which the design and work of God is mainly about.

In the first place, The Seed of man and the Serpent, that's *the high tree, the green tree*. The wicked nature of Satan, that sprouteth forth, that flourisheth, that thriveth every where: The righteous nature of God is like a *low tree*, like a *dry tree*, like a tree without sap, which maketh no fair shew with leaves, nor can bring forth fruit. But the Lord will curse this fruitfull tree, will bring down this high tree; and will exalt the other low tree, will cause the other dry tree to flourish.

In the second place, The Natural Seed of God, the fleshly people of Israel, that's *the high tree*, that's *the green tree*; and the Spiritual Seed is *the low and dry tree*. Fleshly Israel sprouts up, and fills the earth: but Spiritual Israel is low, dry, and barren. Now God will also blast this high tree, this green tree; and cause the barren to bring forth and rejoyce. The Seed of the first mother (*viz.* the first Covenant) shall shrink into the womb again; and the Seed of the second Covenant shall be exalted, multiply, and flourish.

Yet thirdly, Christ after the flesh, with his Disciples and Apostles, are *the high and green tree*: How fresh do they spring forth! how high do they rise and mount up! how abundantly do they flourish! Christ and his Seed, in their fleshly appearance, are very glorious: But the substance of that life, how low doth it run! *that's a low tree, that's a dry tree.* Now God will also abase this fleshly appearance, will also dry up this green tree; and cause the Spiritual substance, both in Christ and in his Seed to shoot up and flourish. Or thus,

God will first dry up all wickedness. All the beauty of, and advantage by sin, shall vanish and perish; and the righteousness in mans nature shall only be exalted and thrive. Yea God will dry up the righteous nature of man also (even in all dispensations) and nothing shall live and flourish but his own Son, but the righteous Nature of Christ. Nay God will blow upon his own Son, and all fleshly excellency in him shall dye likewise. That very Spirit of life which feeds Christ in his flesh, the very Spirit of that life which then lives in him, must dye and wither with him; and only pure life, pure substance must rise up and flourish for ever. This is that *branch* spoken of ver. 22. 23. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also take off the highest branch of the high Cedar, and will set it, I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly Cedar, and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing: in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

When God cast off the natural Israel, when he brought down that high tree, when he dried up that green tree; then from among them did he crop and plant a *branch*,
even

even *Christ after the flesh*, who did grow up and flourish like a goodly *Cedar*, and was a great shelter to all the desolate fowls, he was *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. And when God again drieth up this tree, he hath a *new branch* which he taketh care of, which he will cause to grow up, and become a shelter to all which are made desolate by the withering even of this tree also. But till then it will be a lamentable time to those who are truly broken and made miserable, the old tree (the old shelter) being dried up, and the new one not yet appearing.

M A N S W A Y
T O
L I F E R E J E C T E D,
And a way of a different nature made
choice of by G O D.

I CORINTH. I. VER. 21. TO 26.

For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleaseth God by the foolishnesse of preaching, to save them that beleeve.

For the Jews require a signe, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks, foolishnesse:

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Because the foolishnesse of God is wiser then men: and the weaknesse of God is stronger then men.



HE Lord taught the World a great while by wisdom, to know him: but by all his teachings, in a way of wisdom, they did not learn to know him. Therefore the Lord, at length, layeth aside that course, having so thoroughly proved

it be ineffectual, and takes such a way to teach those whom he intended to teach, as he was sure would be efficacious thereunto.

The world was divided into two parts, viz. *Jews* and *Gentiles* (which two grand divisions comprehend and take in all the subdivisions of each.) God assayed to teach them both by wisdom to know him. By that wise dispensation of his to the *Jews*, he taught the *Jews*; by stirring up a Spirit of wisdom and industry among the *Greeks*, he taught the *Greeks*: And yet neither of them came to any proficiency, *The world by wisdom knew not God.*

So that here is Gods rejecting the way, which man would chuse to learn life in, and the pitching upon a way of his own chusing, with the reason and experiment of both. The way that is so specious in the eye of man, will not do it: Man can never know God in the way of his own fleshly wisdom: Man can never come to enjoy God by having his desires satisfied: If God should teach man so as he would fain learn, he could never come to any thing. O saith *Dives*, Let one come from the dead, let one come from the Lord with the express mind and will of God, and my brethren will receive it! O say the *Jews*, let *Moses*, let one from God teach us the things of God, and we will learn! O saith the nature and spirit of man, let us be instructed according to our capacity, and we will drink in the knowledge and life of God! No, foolish man thou art mistaken, this is not the way to know God: The way is not by having this old vessel filled, but by having it dashed in pieces and made a new.

VER.

VER. 21. *For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that beleeve.*

Here are four things very observable in these words.

1. *The persons whom God saves*, which are, *beleevers*, God doth not save righteous persons, but sinners: nor every sinner, but only him among sinners, who beleeve: He who is touched by Christ with a new nature, which hath a new kind of glue in it, by which his soul cleaveth unto Christ, him God saveth. He who receiveth a new nature, life, and Spirit from Christ, and by vertue of that life, nature and Spirit, followeth Christ *in the regeneration*: He who taketh up the same cross with Christ, and layeth down the same life that Christ did; he shall tast of the same salvation, he shall receive the same crown.

2. *The way whereby God saveth these persons*, which is, *by the foolishness of preaching*; by the preaching of a foolish thing, and in a foolish weak way, to the eye of all flesh. The Lord preacheth to the ear of a mans Spirit the cross of Christ, the soul heareth and receiveth it, and by vertue thereof is saved.

3. *The reason of this way*, or the reason of Gods pitching upon this for the way of salvation, which is, *because it pleasech him*. This way liketh God. Man likes the other way, God likes this way. Man would be led to happinels by the improvement of his life: God doth not like that way; but those whom he leads thither, he liketh to lead by the overturning and crucifying of their life: and that not by any power of theirs, but by his own spirit, which teacheth them the cross, and offereth them up upon the cross of Christ. For man will be content to be crucified, so he may crucify himself, or be crucified
on

on his own cross: No but he must not be crucified by or according to the wisdom of his own flesh, but upon the crosse of Christ by the life and Spirit of Christ.

4. *The ground of this reason*, or the ground why this is the pleasure of God, which is, *because this is the proper way*, the only way, *in the eye of Gods wisdom*. The other way, which is so glorious in mans eye, is but weak and will not do it: Salvation cannot come that way. The Lord hath tried it for the satisfaction of mans nature, and found it ineffectual. He hath tried it over and over again, both among the *Jews* and among the *Greeks*, and it never came to any thing: wherefore he hath now quite left it, and pitched upon that which will prove effectual. He hath utterly left mans wise way, which he knoweth to be foolish; and now prosecuteth his own foolish way, as it appears to man, which he knoweth to be wise.

The Apostle further illustrateth this in the following verses, shewing both what the way of man is (ver. 22.) and what the way of God is (ver. 23.) What this way is in the eye of man (ver. 23.) and what it is in its own nature, which they find it to be, who are truly led into it and enlightened in it (ver. 24. with the necessity hereof on both hands (ver. 25.))

VER. 22. *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.*

This is a proof of the worlds seeking to know God after their own way. This is a cleer and full tipe or representation of it, given forth by the Spirit of God in that age. This is the course of the choicest or best of the na-

ture of man, here manifesting it self both in the *Jews* and *Greeks*, who neither of them approve each others way, but both justify their own, which they must be satisfied in, or they will not come to him who is the fountain of life and salvation. Now, we are all able to read the tipe, but who can read what it signifieth in his own Spirit?

The principal part of the world, wherein all that was excellent was comprised, were the *Jews* and *Greeks*; the one for the law-wisdom and knowledge of God, the other for the wisdom of nature. Now both these seek for that which answers to their own wisdom. The *Jews*, they seek for an evidence according to the Law, the *Greeks* for that which would answer the reason and understanding of a man, according to the excellency of that light of his own nature, the reliques whereof yet remain in him.

The Jews require a sign. The *Jews*, who were the people of God in that dispensation of the Law. When the *Messiah* cometh in the anointing and power of the Spirit, they ask for a *sign*. They cannot but enquire, how Christ would evidence himself to be the *Messiah* according to the Law and the Prophets? They would have such a sign in their way, as should make the thing manifest to them. They would have their *Messiah* come with such a Kingly power and glory as they expected: yea the plain truth is, They would see him with that eye, from which God had designed to hide him.

So the people of God still, in all ages, when any thing of God starts up, call for a *sign*. If they could see such a power of mortification and holiness, such a kind of life, sweetness, and humility, as they look for in the persons who hold it forth, then they would own it: And, alas, this is but an owning of it in the wisdom of the

the flesh, or an owning of Christ so as the flesh would own him, for what man if he did but see such a sign would not own Christ? But Christ will not be owned by the wisdom of man, but by that light which he himself brings with him. The Jews shall not be able to know him, by any light according to the Law, at his first coming: nor shall *Disciples* be able to know him, by any light according to the Gospel, at his second coming. He whom he raiseth, quickeneth, and enlighteneth by the power, life, and light which he bringeth with him, he alone shall know him. They on whom the day dawns, and in whose heart the day-star riseth, shall be able to discern and behold the Sun of righteousness; but all expectations of the flesh shall be disappointed, for the Son of man will not come according to their observations from the Scriptures, but according to the line of life in his own Spirit. Not but that the life, when it breaks forth and appears, will come with the true nature of holiness, and walk in the true waies of holiness (for the life cannot but be like it self, pure, clean, and holy throughout) but yet this will not be after such a manner, or in such particular paths as men look for it in, but unclean man shall stumble at the purity of the true life, changing it with uncleanness: And this will be a just reward to him for his leaning to his own understanding, and undertaking with the eye of his flesh to discover, discern, and determine concerning the things of God.

And the Greeks seek after wisdom. Wise man seeks for that in Christ, which may answer to the rules and principles of his wisdom. He seeks for the power of nature, for a demonstration according to the measure and comprehension of nature. If any truth did appear in such a way as might be manifest and glorious to the eye

of his reason, or as would suit with the principles of his Logique, Philosophy, &c. then he would receive it. And man is so settled herein, that he can despise any thing that doth not assault him upon these terms, which the wisdom of God disdaineth to do. But yet this is the expectation of the world concerning Christ, all sorts look for that in him which should answer their wisdom, which should (if not flow from the principles of their religion and wisdom) yet at least should be such as might become an head and root thereto. And thus indeed Christ will be to all things which he saveth and purifieth, but not so to any thing as it now stands corrupted in the flesh, as all the wisdom, religion and righteousness of man now doth.

VER. 23. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness:*

O what a disappointment to the whole world is the Kingdom and Gospel of Christ! They expect a glorious, a triumphing Christ; a Christ that should make their religion live, their reason live, their wisdom and righteousness live, that he himself should become an head to it: But the Gospel testifieth of a Christ who is dead to all this himself, and cometh to kill it in all whom he saves.

This is a loathsome doctrine to all sorts of men (yea even to those who can receive and delight in the doctrine of the crosse, and sufferings for Christs sake, according as they have apprehended it:) For they look to be saved by having their reason rectified, and their religion perfected, whereas Christ cometh with a crosse, to crucify
all

all their motions in this kind, together with the very root from whence they proceed.

Now, what is the issue of this? Why, all stumble at him. Neither *Jew* with his wisdom in the Law, nor *Greek* with his knowledge of nature, in the midst of all his learning and art, can own *the Lord Christ*. No man can own Christ in the light which he lives in, and perhaps admires, but only in the light of Gods Spirit. The *Jews* cannot possibly receive him, for want of a *sign*; nor the *Greeks* for want of *wisdom*: but he is a stone for the one to stumble at, and a meer may-game for the other to laugh at. Christ, Gods Christ is such a thing as the wisdom of man scoffs at, and the religion of man stumbles at. The *Greeks*, they look upon a crucified Christ as ridiculous, and the *Jews* cannot possibly receive such an one for their Saviour.

VER. 24. *But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

Though Christ is not that, which man looks for, in his way: yet he is more then it, in Gods way. He hath power enough to answer the expectation of the *Jews*, and wisdom enough to answer the desires of the *Greeks*; only neither of these can see what he is, for want of an eye. Yea there is more wisdom and power then either of them seek, in that very crosse, because of which they despise him.

And they whom God lets out his Spirit upon, they whom God calls out of this blindness of mans religion and wisdom into his light, they presently see and feel
his

his wisdom and power unto their salvation. Whomever God calls out of the line of this world into the line of his own nature and Spirit, they presently see and know his Christ, and are forthwith sensible of the vertue and wisdom of that crosse, which the wise and religious ones of this world cannot but despise.

VER. 25. *Because the foolishnesse of God is wiser then men and the weaknes of God is stronger then men.*

God intends to baffle man, and therefore doth not at all proceed in the way of his wisdom and strength, but in a contrary way, even in such an one as is foolish and weak in his eye: And in this way will he bring that to passe, which cannot be done in the way which mans culls out. Man is not to be wrought upon, is not to be formed by such a Christ as he looks for, or in such a way: but by a Christ of Gods forming in his own wisdom and strength, and by a way quite contrary to mans. This way of Gods foolishnesse and weaknesse, as man accounts it, hath the true vertue in it, and is truly proper unto mans estate; and the other hath not. If God should come forth in mans way to save him, he could not possibly do it: for man seeketh the salvation of that which God destroyeth, and by the destruction whereof he saveth him.

So that this is the true reason why man is so out in his apprehension, judgment, and desire, even when he is wisest, most serious and deepest; it is because the foundation of his wisdom and strength is weak. The nature of his eye is shallow, and cannot reach into the depth of things. The root of his strength is frail, it appeareth

appeareth so even in the things of this outward life and nature, and how can he possibly traverse through any dispensation, to the mark of life at the end thereof? But God cannot possibly fail, because his wisdom and strength hath a foundation, which supporteth it in its whole course, insomuch as the greatest foolishnesse and weaknesse, which man can possibly fasten upon any of his undertakings, far surpasseth mans greatest wisdom and strength. So that let there be a trial thereof at any time, this will be the result, Mans wisdom and strength will fail, but Gods foolishnesse and weaknesse will fully compassse what ever he undertook and went about.

THE

T H E
W I S D O M O F G O D

despised and rejected, even in all its
appearances, by the Spirit of this
world: but still justified by
the light and Spirit of life
in his children.

M A T. II. VER. 16. TO 20.

But whereunto shall I liken this generation; It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows.

And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: We have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and sinners: but wisdom is justified of her children.

FROM the former part of these words (which naturally extendeth to the very last clause) I shall only take notice of these two things.

1. There

1. There are different blasts, and different sounds, from the same Spirit of God. Sometimes his *Trumper* sounds joyfully, sometimes mournfully. The Lord both calls out to joy, and the Lord also calls out to sorrow and lamentation by his Spirit, in the several strains of his life: or sometimes he pipes, and sometimes he mourns.

Piping and mourning, though they have the same general nature of the light and life of God in them, yet they also differ several waies. As first, in the Spirit or temper of the minister: for though they may both pass through one and the same minister, yet God usually chuseth several ones, as here *John Baptist* for the one, *Christ* for the other, Yea if it be the same instrument at any time, yet it is then differently tuned with a Spirit or temper suitable to each. Secondly, they differ in the nature of the message or things dispenced, so *Johns* was a ministry of death and repentance, *Christs* was a ministry of life and salvation. The very life and salvation that *John* preached, he preached in the letter, which killeth the very death and repentance that *Christ* preached, he preached in the quickening Spirit. Thirdly, They differ in the manner of the delivery: The pipe sounds livelily and merrily, but an invitation to mourning is not proper, unless it issue out dolefully.

2. The Spirit of man answers not the Spirit of God in either of these: The sound of Gods Trump is a strange thing to man, he knows not the meaning of it. He sees no cause of joy, when God sounds to joy: nor no cause of sorrow, when God mourns to him as a pattern of lamentation. Mans Spirit, being low and carnal, cannot taste or discern the Spirit of the Lord, which is deep and Spiritual in al his motions. Man can see cause of joy or sorrow in the affairs and occurrences of this world, but not in the Spiritual dispensations of God: and so the

Spirit of man, not understanding the Spirit of God, cannot come to bear a part there. These two particulars I have here mentioned, because they very properly make way to the last clause.

But wisdom is justified of her children.

Wisdom is a certain kind of skill of ordering things aright unto their ends. *Wisdom* moveth from a principle of true light, and toward an end which it understandeth and comprehendeth that light. The motions of wisdom alwaies arise from, and are suited to a true understanding. Wisdom of every kind hath light in its kind, and guides its councils and motions by it. He is a fool that doth he knoweth not what, or he knoweth not why.

By *wisdom* here is meant the true and just proportion which is in the waies of God, throughout his several dispensations, to his understanding. That which God adviseth to man, that which he calleth for from him (whether in the state of nature, or in the state of the Law, or in the state of the Gospel) the Lord knoweth to be good and proper for him. It had been good for *Adam*, it had been his wisdom, to have been faithfull to that light which God had set upon him, which could not but teach him obedience to his wise and bountifull Creator. It had been wisdom for the *Jews* to have observed the Law, which God in a way of especial kindnesse wrote down with his own finger for their use, and enlarged with many directions and precepts from his own lips by his Prophets: This consideration *Moses* presseth upon them, Deut. 4. ver. 5. 6. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the Land whither ye go to possesse it. Keep therefore, and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. It had been

w wisdom

wisdom to the *Disciples* to have kept close to the Spirit and light of the Gospel, to the easy yoke and precepts of Christ, and not to have returned to the darkness and vanity of the fleshly understanding: *See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.* Yea it would be the wisdom of all men, not to give ear to the prophane-ness and lusts of their own corrupt hearts; but to hearken to that light of God, which glimmeringly yet shines upon their own natures, and upon the natures of things, teaching them his fear, and to turn both from ungodlineffe and unrighteousnesse: *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding,* Job 28. ver. 28.

The *children of wisdom*, are such as are begotten by the wisdom of God in any dispensation. Every strain of every dispensation, both of wisdom and folly, hath its children. There are children both of light and darkness, in all the kinds and degrees of each. Now such as are begotten and brought forth, by any principle of light or wisdom in any dispensation, they are the children of that light, the children of that wisdom.

To *justify* wisdom denoteth three things: first to see it, Secondly to own and acknowledg it, Thirdly to observe it.

1. *To see it.* They who are not born in the light, cannot see the light. They who have not a principle of wisdom in them, cannot discern the wisdom which is in things. The natural man cannot see the wisdom of the Spirit of God. He who hath an eye, he alone can see the light. This is the happinesse of him who is born of God, he hath the eye of that wisdom which discerneth the things of God.

2. *To own and acknowledg it as wisdom.* There is such an enmity in man against the wisdom of God, that though he did see it, yet he could not freely acknow-

ledg it, but would be secretly contriving to magnify and prefer the way of his own wisdom above it. Man hath not the true eye to see the true light with, and that eye which he hath he shuts against the light, because he loveth darknes better. Do we not see some men set themselves against that good in others, which their consciences cannot but commend? Did not many of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* deal so with Christ? *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darknesse rather light, because their deeds were evil.* Is not the extent of this truth as large, as the reason? That Spirit which is evil and doth evil, loveth that darknesse which maketh it seem good, and hateth and cannot but hate that light which manifesteth it to be evil: *For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deed should be reprov'd.* But now the children of wisdom, who are born of the seed and Spirit of wisdom, and are brought up in the light and truth of wisdom, they cannot but own wisdom: *But he that doth truth, cometh to the light; that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God,* Joh. 3. ver. 19. 20. 21.

3. *To observe it*, to subject themselves to it; to dance when the Lord pipes, to lament when he mourns; to take the yoke of the Lord upon them: Whereas other men, that are not thus naturally begotten by wisdom, conspire against it, saying, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* The children of wisdom cannot but be subject in every dispensation, and none else can be truly subject. And this is implied in that word *but*, *but wisdom is justified of her children.* Let every one else do what they will; Let all the world scorn, and despise the wisdom of God in any of his dispensations, yet he that is a child of wisdom cannot but observe it. The nature of wisdoms child, doth as naturally incline him

him toward the light and wisdom of his own dispensation, as the nature of foolish man doth set him against it. From hence observe these few things.

Observ. 1. *There is wisdom in all the sounds of God in his dispensations.* His Spirit what instruments or ministers soever he maketh use of to give out the sound by, doth it wisely. When God calls either to joy or to sorrow, by what instrument soever, whether by *John* or by *Christ*, he doth it understandingly. All the dispensations of God have their foundation in his wisdom, and their whole course according to the depth of his understanding. The voice and appearance of God through his ministers in such different waies, even seemingly contrary, doth not want wisdom.

Observ. 2. *That man doth not see, doth not acknowledge, doth not observe, doth not justify the wisdom of God in his dispensations.* The not answering of the sound, is the condemning of the wisdom. Thus much was hinted at before, but man doth more then so, for he doth directly quarrel at it, as is expressed in the foregoing verses. They quarrel both at *Johns* severity and strictness of life, saying, *he hath a devil*, and at *Christs* freedom of conversation, reviling him as *a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and sinners.*

Observ. 3. *That the seed of God, they who have his light, they who have his life in them, they justify him in his dispensations of it.* They know his several sounds. They see wisdom both in his piping, and in his mourning: and they testify so much; for they dance when he pipes, and lament when he mourns to them.

M A N S R I G H T

Temper and Practise.

ECCLES. 12. VER. 12. 13.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study (or reading) is a wearinesse of the flesh.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his Commandements: for this is the whole duty of man.

Solomon was by God made wise, and had faithfully employed that wisdom to discover by reason, and search out by experience the whole state and course of this world. And what he knew and found, that he testifieth, namely, that it is *vanity* and *vexation*. *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* It comes from vanity, it produceth vanity, it ends in vanity, yea it is vanity. All that is to be found in this world, it is a vanity of a vanity, and can afford nothing but vexation to that Spirit which is understanding and wise. A bauble may please a fool, but it cannot please a man. The very root of this present estate is vain, and therefore such must needs be all the designs, motions and fruits of it. Yea the present estate of the world is so vain, that it hath not in it wherewith to answer the present Spirit of man, which

it self is also vain. For the whole nature of this world, though it is suited to man, yet it doth not, fully reach him, and cannot afford what he seeks and cannot but desire: for he must move according to his nature, according to his principle, which nature and principle carrieth him beyond the estate of this world.

Now what should man do in this estate of things? If he give himself to reading, study, and experience, that he might grow wise, alas, he wil but toil himself! for this field is very vast. How large is the course of knowledge and experience in every kind! There is no end of these things, the abundance of them being so great: and to what purpose should a man tire his frail flesh therein! The sum of all is this, This is the *conclusion* which a man must come to at last, (or else he reads and studies to little purpose:) and this he may find sufficient ground to induce him to, without half so much toil and wearing out of his nature, namely, in the first place *to fear God*, and then to apply himself to the keeping of his *commandments*. This is the sweetest, the quietest and most proper temper for the Spirit of a man to be in, and this is the clearest and safest course for him to take. *The fear of God* is the right frame of his mind, and the *observation of his commandments* is the adequate square of his conversation.

1. *To fear God.* There is a root from whence man came, there is a power in its nature and vertue far above him; this he is to fear. If there be any such thing as fear in mans nature, surely God may very justly call for it from him, and his make, present estate and condition, do very aptly dispose him to the answer of this call. Fear denotes the subjection of the Spirit to the Majesty and might of that which is over one. God is great in Majesty, man very low in his present condition, excee dingly beneath him, being but the clay of him the potter, (but
the

the remote earth of his Spirit :) nay not only so , but the fallen clay , the fallen earth , the remote earth fallen , and lying under the severe lash of him who formed it , which it is not at all able to undergo and pass through , and therefore it hath very great reason to fear him .

That same foolish floutingness of Spirit (which doth now so abound in some parts of the world) to make it self equal with God , &c. is not radically intelligent. *Christ* who was *equal with God* by his descent from him , having the root of the same life in him , yet acknowledged himself a man , and in his distressed estate beneath a man , *I am a worm and no man*. The solidity of the seed , the solidity of the life of God knoweth its weakness ; but the foolish Spirit of man , in the midst of its weakness , fancieth it self to be strong . Who was more certain then *Christ* , both concerning the nature and good will of God to him ? and yet he exceedingly feared ; and not in a way of negligence , or by height of notion , but by the inward substantial efficacy of faith and prayer , escaped what he feared , *Ebr. 5. vers. 7. Who in the dayes of his flesh , when he had offered up prayers and supplications , with strong crying and tears , unto him that was able to save him from death , and was heard , in that he feared*. While a man understandeth not his state or course , nor the heart of him who disposeth of him , what can he do but fear ? Now such is the condition of man : for though in a poor low sence he may be said to understand somewhat of these things , yet in a deeper sence he doth not ; and therefore hath greater ground for fear , then for the removal of it .

God hath placed fear in mans nature , and calleth for fear from him . This *the nature of man* , of it self , yeeldeth : This the *Jews* , in their dispensation , were taught to yeeld : The seed of this was sown in *Christ* himself , (who had the spirit of fear powred out upon him , *Isa. 11. vers. 2.*)

ver. 3.) and his life and Spirit also yeeldeth it, yea this was also sown in, and called for by God from the Disciples of Christ; *Be not high-minded, but fear. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, &c.* And let every sober man in any true light, tel me if it doth not nearly concern him to see thoroughly before him, ere he undertake to acquit himself thereof? It is not any notion, whatsoever, assumed into the understanding, which can acquit a man from any thing which is imposed by God upon his nature and present estate.

2. *To keep his commandements.* God is not so great a stranger to mankind, but that he hath still some dealings therewith, either at some distance, or at a neerer hand. There are no sort of persons which have not commandements from God by some light or other, whether more remote or more immediate. Doth not *the light of the nature* shine over all the earth? Did not *the light of the Law* dispensed by *Moses* shine over all the Jews? (*In Judah is God known, his name is great in Israel.*) Did not *the light of the Gospel* shine over all the Disciples? Yea did not the beams and rays of both these latter lights, dart up and down throughout the world? *Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world,* Rom. 10. 18. This then is the duty which lieth upon all men, namely to keep those commandements which God pleaseth to impote on them: to walk with God, in the present dispensation wherein God placeth him, either by the light set up in his nature, or by any further light dispensed by grace in this his fallen estate: to observe that distance, both of nature and religion, which God hath put between himself and man; and that justice and mercy toward mankind, which God hath either written in his nature, or by any further means maketh known
 V v v unto

unto him. This is the proper course of man, this is the proper way for man to walk in.

And this will be safest for him: for he must one day come to judgment for every thing done by him in his present estate, as is immediately annexed in the following verse, viz. vers. 14. *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good, or whether evil.* The fabrick of man, the light which God hath given him, his whole course, whether open or private, whether differing from, or answering to his light, as it passeth off from this stage, so it is to appear and be reviewed on another. God hath a ballance to weigh mans nature, Spirit and course in (even in the most secret and inward part of it) for which he hath set a time, and which he will do thoroughly. God will bring his heart and all the motions thereof to trial, and a most righteous judgment shall passe thereupon. In this trial God will produce his nature and Spirit which he had from him, and the light stamped in his nature, with the several additions made unto it since, &c. And will it not then appear best for all men to have applied themselves faithfully (according to their present light and strength) to the fear of God, and to the keeping of his commandments, how vain and fruitlesse soever now it may seem?

The *Commandments* of God are originally and chiefly written in the nature of man (as every creature also hath a Law in it commanding and guiding it) and man, did he but find out and follow the writing of his own nature, could not sin. *Iustise* and *mercy* toward man, and *humility* and *obediense* toward God are entwisted in him, so that wherever the nature of man is, these are to be found, though of a truth so defaced that it is very hard sending of them. Why this is the whole of man, this is
all

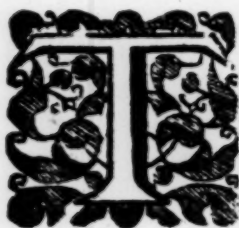
all that God requires of him. The Lord may give him other commands of institution, for his exercise and instruction in this his broken estate, but this is the chief thing he expects from him even there. *He hath benedicted thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah. 6. 8. Thou thinkest to please him with sacrifices and instituted services; alas they all tend but to lead thee to this, and are rejected when they looke their subserviency, and expect an acceptance for themselves.

THE
SEVERITY OF GOD
AGAINST
CORRUPT SHEPHERDS

Who will rescue his flock from
them.

EZEK. 34. VER. 2.

Son of Man, prophesy against the Shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the Shepherds, wo to the Shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves: should not the shepherds feed the flocks?



His prophesy is against the Shepherds, *against the Shepherds of Israel.* Israel is the flock of God, the Shepherds of Israel are those whom the Lord hath appointed to oversee and take care of his flock, in the several parcels thereof committed to their charge. Now the Lord pronounceth wo against them, *wo to the Shepherds of Israel.* Why, what is the matter? What do they do? The very

ry next words return the answer, they *feed themselves*: That which they mind in the work of God is themselves. And indeed, this is the proper motion of mans Spirit wherever God placeth it: Let God set mans Spirit where he will, or about what work he will, he will be seeking himself: Let God provide never so well for him, he will be providing further for himself. The injustice whereof is convictively argued in the very next clause, *should not the Shepherds feed the flocks?* Is this righteous in a Shepherd to look to himself, and neglect the flock? Is not this like an hireling, but not like a natural Shepherd? What hath the Shepherd to do to feed on the flock? He is to feed and preserve them for the use of his Master, but surely the Lord did never intend that he should make his own carnal advantage of them. This charge is further prosecuted in the next verse.

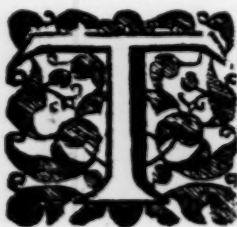
VER. 3. *Ye eat the fat, and ye cloth you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.*

All besides me, saith Christ, are *thieves and robbers*. There is no true Shepherd but Christ, and such as are breathed upon by him, such as savour of his life and Spirit: Others are but thieves and robbers, which eat the best of the flesh, and cloth themselves with the wool of the flock; They seek their own advantage out of the fruits of the Spirit of Christ upon the flock. If any be fatter, be more devout, more strict, (or have finer wool upon their backs) they prey most upon these, they endeavour most to work these about to their own selfish corrupt ends: Those whom Christ feeds, they kill. The Spirit of man in the place of Christ, is the greatest enemy and butcher to the life of Christ that can be: for if there be any of his teachings, of his nature, of his life breaking forth in the flock, presently he bends him-

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self to persecute and kill that. The nature; reason, and wisdom of man thirsteth to make the nature, life, and Spirit of Christ subject to it; and if it break not forth in such a way, as he according to this light can justify it, he persweth it most bitterly. Upon this account have all the flock of God been still persecuted in all ages, not only by the unclean spirit of the world, but also by the human and fleshly-enlightened Spirit of the Shepherds of Israel: for God still delighteth to appear in waies very strange to their wisdom, and they have not patience to wait for the revelation of his Spirit, but hasten their judgment from their observations on the letter, and thereby take occasion from that letter to persecute that Spirit which penned it. The *Priests* and *false Prophets* of old did thus, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in the daies of Christ did thus, the *false Apostles* and *teachers* in the times of the Apostles and primitive Christians did thus: but none of these sorts could discover their own hypocrisy, but all was still covered (even from their own eye, in those that were any what ingenious) with a zeal and devotion for God; his *Law*, his *Truths*, his *Ordnances*. And doubtlesse this will be a strange sight, even to the Shepherds themselves, when God shall one day make it manifest to them, viz. *that they have eaten the fat, clothed themselves with the wool, and killed them which his Spirit fed.*

Ye feed not the flock. Ye feed on them, but ye feed them not. O strange! can any Shepherd, which is any thing conscientious, from his heart acknowledg this? Is it not his whole work to feed them? Hath he any desire to feed on them? And yet this is the posture of the Shepherds of Israel, saith he, who knoweth the Shepherds, and knoweth the flocks, and knoweth what it is to feed them: He knoweth that they do not feed the flock, but bear it and prey upon it. That which they cannot

Canot bring to their own bent; they fall foully upon. They vent their own bitterneſſe upon them, and they incenſe the Magiſtrate againſt them; but they do not bring forth any food convenient for them. This is the voice of the Lord, *thus ſaith the Lord God unto the Shepherds of Iſrael.* Indeed the language of the Shepherds themſelves is otherwiſe, They ſay that they bring good food unto them, and that others can taſte it to be good; but it is the niceneſſ, the wantonneſſ, the unſavorineſſ of their palates that they feed not thereon: But the Lord ſaith that they do not feed the flock, that they do not lay ſining food before them.

VER. 4. *The diſeaſed have ye not ſtrengthened, neither have ye healed that which was ſick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that which was loſt; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.*

Mark what casualties the ſheep are liable unto, Here are diſeaſed, ſick, broken, driven away, and loſt. And the duty of a Shepherd is to ſtrengthen that which is diſeaſed, to heal that which is ſick, to bind up that which is broken, to bring again that which is driven away, to ſeek that which is loſt. That which is weak among the ſheep, the ſtrong ſpirit of the Shepherd ſhould ſtrengthen; That which is ſick, ſroward, and unfit to receive its food, the Shepherd ſhould heal; That which is wounded, or broken by the violence of any enemy, or by the correcting hand of God, the Shepherd ſhould bind up; That which is driven away, or loſt by its own wandering, the Shepherd ſhould ſeek out and bring back. Thus the Spirit of Chriſt doth. He taketh tender care of the ſheep, He venureth (yea he lieth down) his

his life for the sheep; He sets himself in direct opposition on against all enemies of all sorts, which would prey upon the sheep; He stands between the sheep and all the wrath and wounds of God, taking them upon himself, receiving upon himself the venome of all that lights on them, and binding up and healing them; yea he seeketh out very diligently, never leaving till he hath recovered and reduced that which was driven away, or by any other means lost, insomuch as he will be able to give a very faithful account to his father of his ministry, saying, *of all that thou hast given me, I have lost none.* Nor may I here omit in this place to annex that testimony of the Lord by the Prophet Isaiah concerning him, chap. 53. ver. 4. 5. 6. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, &c. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes (or bruise) we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* This was the practise of the great and good Shepherd.

But the Shepherds of Israel do not thus: They are not thus forgetful of themselves, and mindful of the flock; but they are mindful of themselves, and tender of themselves, but rough with the flock, *with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.* O how do the Shepherds exclaim against the diseased, the sick, the broken, the wandering, the lost sheep! Their tenderness extends but to such as are (at least in a good degree) whole in their eye; but they are forcible toward the rest, and very cruel in their injunctions, directions, and dealings with such as are afflicted by God, or wounded by the enemy. Yea if there be any provocation in the sheep toward their God (as there usually are enough, and afflictions ensuing thereupon) they increase their misery: They

They do like the Heathen whom God complains of, Zech. 1. 15. that when he was but a little displeased, they helped forward the affliction: If God do but see cause to smite, they presently persecute, *They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and speak to the grief of him whom thou hast wounded.* The flock should be enlightened and overcome by the Spirit of Christ, but the spirit of man cannot do this, therefore he must use force and cruelty, without which he can do nothing. *This was your own doing, ye did not want warning, and now ye may thank your selves for what followes.* This is the spirit and language of the cruel Shepherds towards the poor sheep, who are sick at their very souls, who still lay load upon the sheep, though the main fault was in themselves, as the Lord here testifieth more abundantly in the following verses. Yea in stead of a skilful and tender application of themselves to their disease and misery, they and the rest of the flock of their spirit thrust and push at them ver. 22. and do occasion their being made a prey, ver. 23. *Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and push all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad: Therefore will I give my flock, and they shall no more be a prey, and I will judge between cattel and cattel. Ye have passed your judgment upon the flock, and have thrust away my choice: ye have distinguished between cattel and cattel: I will go over them again, and I will distinguish likewise: and I will be tender to those you have been tharp to, and I shall be tharp to those you have been tender to, as is more fully expressed ver. 16. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment.*

VER. 5. *And they were scattered because there is no Shepherd: and they became meat to al the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.*

Here are the effects of this negligence of the Shepherds toward the sheep, which are, First, *the scattering of the sheep* to seek food and other necessities. They want a Shepherd to provide for them. They want a Shepherd to lead and guide them in and out, and so according to their own weak, simple, innocent nature they wander and run astray. *There is no Shepherd*, saith their God. The same God that saith, *Wo to the Shepherds of Israel* ver. 2. saith here (and ver. 8.) *there is no Shepherd*, rendering that as the reason why the sheep are scattered. Give ear and consider, *O ye Shepherds of Israel*, ye acquit your selves, and ye lay the blame of the sheeps scattering upon themselves, but the Lord laieth it upon you, he saith it is through your unskillfulness and negligence; he saith it is *because there is no Shepherd*. There are enough that take upon them the name of Shepherds, and will go for Shepherds: but it seems there are none that are Shepherds in the eye of God, none that the sheep can find Shepherds *in the cloudy and dark day*, which is the time here intended, as is expressed ver. 12. Secondly, *the danger which befel them in this their scattering*. In their scattering they became a prey. In stead of finding food for themselves, they became food to every wild beast. A scattered sheep is fit for any devouring beast to make a prey of. The sheep are only safe while they are in their folds, or while they are in their proper pastures, watched by their Shepherds. This is further illustrated, together with the negligence of such as pass for Shepherds, ver. 6.

VER.

VER. 6. *My sheep wandered through all the mountains,
and upon every hill: yea my flock was scattered upon all
the face of the earth; and none did search or seek after
them.*

Mountains and Hills are proper places to yeild pasture for sheep. They were of old the places of worship, and where Gods people did worship him, and where he did feed them. The poor destitute sheep wander up and down from mountain to hil, and from hil to mountain, yea over all the face of the earth to seek food. They were hungry and thirsty after their God, after their natural food, after the living waters: That which their Shepherds laid before them was not life, was not truth, was not meat understandingly fitted to their conditions, so that the extremity of their condition forceth them to wander: And they wander up and down every where, through every mountain, upon every hill, where they may have the least hope to hear any news of their God, that they may gather a little food. But mark, Such was the negligence of the Shepherds, that they never looked after them. They thought themselves well rid of them. They minded only such as staid with them, such as honoured them, &c. but the poor sick wandering sheep they never did search or seek after, *and none did search or seek after them.*

X x x 2

VER.

VER. 7. 2. 9: *Therefore ye Shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.*

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no Shepherd, neither did my Shepherds search for my flock, but the Shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock:

Therefore, O ye Shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

Mark how pathetically zealous the Lord is, how angry with the Shepherds! how affected with the misery of the sheep! and how close he laies the blame thereof upon the Shepherds! *My flock, saith he, became a prey, and meat to every beast of the field, because there was no Shepherd, neither did my Shepherds search for my flock, &c.* as if he had said, If there had been a Shepherd, the flock could not have been in this condition. But yet they will needs go for Shepherds, and for my Shepherds too. Well, see how my Shepherds have behaved themselves toward my poor flock! They took not due care of them, while the sheep remained with them. They looked not after them, when they were scattered from them. But all that they minded, both before and after, was their own profit and pleasure, *but the Shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock.* Therefore, O ye Shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

VER. 10. *Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against the Shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, & cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the Shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.*

Here is great sharpness and severity very emphatically
expressed

expressed. *Thus saith the Lord God.* This is no other than the voice of God. This is not the harsh imagination of man concerning the Shepherds, but the sober revelation of the Spirit of God. It is three several times affirmed to be the word of God before it is fully uttered, once in ver. 7. again ver. 9. and here again in this verse. Yea there is the great oath of God prefixed at the beginning of it, ver. 8. *As I live saith the Lord, surely because,* &c. *As I live* is thus. This is my mind concerning you. Thus have ye done, and thus will I do, what ever ye may apprehend to the contrary. This iniquity have I found in you, even in you the Shepherds of Israel, even in you my Shepherds, and thus I will reward it. Well, How is it? What will God do to these Shepherds?

In the first place, he professeth himself to be against them; *Behold, I am against the Shepherds*; They think that they are safe under Gods institution and shadow, being the *Shepherds of Israel*, and that they do him great and good service, and that the Lord will appear for them; even against those sheep which have wandered from them, and denied them to be Shepherds: but the Lord professeth himself to be against them. Please yourselves how ye will in your own apprehensions concerning things, but this is the true state of the case, I am bent against you, I am your professed enemy: *Behold, I am against the Shepherds.* *Behold.* Take notice of it, O ye Shepherds, and take notice of it all ye children of men, who are apt (through your ignorance of the light and power of God) to think so highly of the Shepherds.

Secondly, the Lord saith that he will require his flock at their hands. Because they have not been (from the Lord, to and the flock) what they undertook to be, therefore hath the flock miscarried. If they had been Shepherds, if they had had the light of God to have led the

flock by, the flock had not wandred and been made a prey of. Therefore to them doth the Lord most justly impute it, and of them will he require the wandrings, the sufferings, the misery, the blood of his flock. If they had not the light and Spirit of God, why did they undertake the work of God? If they had not slept in, God could have provided Shepherds himself. Therefore having undertaken it, their unskillfulness, their unfaithfulness, their self-seeking and cruelty, with all the danger and misery which accrues to the flock thereby, is most righteously laid by the Lord at their dores.

Thirdly, the Lord will turn them out of their office with great disgrace, He will *cause them to cease from feeding the flock*. They seem now to be feeders (alas, what feeders are there of the flock, but they!) This is their employment, and in all ages they have been very busie about it, viz. about feeding the flock. And the same spirit would still fain proceed in the same work, but the Lord will make them leave off when he once takes them to task, he will *cause them to cease from feeding the flock*: He will make them and all others see, that they have not light, that they have not a spirit, that they have not understanding, that they are no way fit for this work, and so he will take an account of their stewardship, and turn them out of it, and employ others whom he maketh and knoweth to be fit. *I will give you Pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding*, Jerem. 3. ver. 15.

Fourthly, they shall lose all that delight which they had in preying upon the flock; that Wolvish nature of theirs, which used to feast and satisfy it-self with the fat of the flock, shall be gratified therewith no more, but in stead thereof shall be pained and tormented. *Neither shall the Shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.*

I intend not to proceed any further in this chapter after this manner, but only to add somewhat by way of application concerning what hath been already observed, wherein some further considerations, of some things in this chapter of the same nature, will of themselves fall in. But first I judg it convenient to start two or three questions, the consideration whereof may cast some further light, both about that which went before, and also about that which is to follow. [The Questions are these, First, *What Israel is?* Secondly, *What the Shepherds of Israel are?* Thirdly, *What are the mountains of Israel?* Israel and the Shepherds have been already mentioned in the foregoing verses, and the mountains of Israel are mentioned ver. 13. and 14.

Ans. There is a threefold Israel, and answerably threefold Shepherds, and threefold mountains, whereupon these several Shepherds are to feed these several Israels of God. In the first place, *There is the outward shadow or tipe*, which is also truth, though not before that which it represents; for there it is but a shadow. Secondly, *There is the inward substance* of that shadow or tipe: for so it is in a true sence, though in another sence (fully as true) it self be also outward. Thirdly, *There is the inmost nature*, the pure life and spirit. This alone with God goeth for truth, and the two former are only acceptable and owned according to the place they have here.

1. *There is the outward Israel*, which were *that people of the Jews*, who were separated by God from the rest of the world, who were begotten anew, who were a new seed unto God from among the nations, or that peculiar earth wherein God did sow the seed of his life. They had the discoveries and knowledg of God, the protection of God, the love of God, &c. God took them out from the rest of the world, in the sight of the world,

world, to himself, forming them for his people, disposing of them as his people, giving them a land to themselves, and cutting out their particular inheritances for them, giving them laws and ordinances to walk with him, and undertaking to preserve and defend them therein, in the midst of all the malice and power of the Nations round about. Al the light which the world had, was but darknesse before them. The life, wisdom, beauty and excellency of all the world besides, was but death, folly and deformity to them. The rest of the world were unclean dogs, living in the unholy earth, and feeding on unclean things: But these were the children, the holy seed, dwelling in the holy Land: These knew the Father, and had their provision of bread from him.

These had *Shepherds* to feed them, the *Priests* the *Prophets*, the *Butlers* of the Lord, who were to receive light from God, and hold it forth to them, whereby they might come to know the mind of God, and walk with him in that dispensation of the Law.

And these had *mountains* to feed on, good pastures upon the mountains. Their *Jerusalem*, their *Temple* was built upon a mountain, and there were many other high places whereupon *Synagogues* were built, where they might come and feed upon the God of Israel.

2. There is a *second* or *Spiritual Israel*, which are the *Disciples of Christ*, who are separated not only from the rest of the world, but from the Jews also. These were begotten of a more pure seed; for in this earth the Lord did sow a more inward seed, a more spiritual nature. All the light of the Jews was but darknesse before them. The love wherewith God loved the Jews, was but hatred in compare with that which he set forth upon them: The very Jews themselves (that famous, that only people of God) were but unclean dogs in compare with

with these children. Their *Manna*, their bread was but chaff in compare with the pure fine wheat, wherewith God fed these children.

These also had *Shepherds*, to wit, the *Apostles* of Christ, the *Evangelists*, the *Prophets* under this new dispensation, as also *Pastours* and *Teachers*, which God qualified by his Spirit, and by the same Spirit set over them. These did as far surmount the former Shepherds, as this dispensation did the former dispensation. *Among these that are born of women, there is not a greater Prophet then John the Baptist: but he that is least in the Kingdom of God, is greater then he.*

This *Israel* also had *mountains*, whereupon were *pastures* for them to feed. The mountain of this *Israel*, and also the food of this *Israel* (for I shall now let pass the outward part, and speak a little more inwardly) was that in the nature and Spirit of God, from whence their nature did flow: As indeed, that was the mountain of the former *Israel*, and that is also mans mountain, yea and the creatures too: which general comprehendeth in it all the particular mountains, and varieties of foods, according to their several kinds. The creature is made what it is, and lives by the will, wisdom, power, and love of God. Man is differenced from the creature by a peculiar love, power, wisdom and will. Old *Israel* is differenced from the common state of lost man, by a further peculiar strain of these. The Disciples of Christ are differenced from the old *Israel* by a yet more new strain. (for though God be but one, and so that which floweth from him but one also: yet as this one effluce comprehendeth in it all varieties of natures, so doth it point at all the foundations of this variety in this one root, which we can in no wise apprehend without considering it as various. Hence we are fain to contemplate in the Godhead not only various things, as *love, wisdom, meekness,*

wrath, roughnesse, &c. but also various kinds of love, various kinds of wisdom, &c.

This is *mount Zion*, whereupon this City and all the holy things of God, appertaining to this Israel, are built: *ye a e come to mount Sion.* And now all things are safe, because their *foundation is in the holy mountains*: and yet all things must fall, because their foundations must fall. That which is brought forth must needs sink, because that which brought it forth sinks. And yet that which sinks and perisheth must needs live again, because its foundation cannot but live again. Hence necessarily floweth the redemption of Israel, of new Israel, of old Israel, of man, of the creature: for though they may dye, not only in their severall natures, but also in their severall roots, yet the primary Spring both of them and of their roots liveth, and cannot but conquer all the death which can overtake them.

3. *There is the inmost Israel*, which is, *the pure seed of God*, the pure nature of God, which no vessel can defile, but it purifieth every vessel into which it enters. This is not the outward garment, the body; nor the soul, though as pure as Adams: but the inward nature and substance of Christ. Nor is it the anointing or holy Spirit of God, but the nature which is anointed with the Holy Spirit of God, from whence the anointing floweth into the nature both of the soul and body of man. This is the son, this is the heir. Both the other were but children by dispensations (or at best but by a nature begotten by a transient dispensation) but this by the very nature of God.

These also have their *Shepherds*. God formeth, even out of this nature also, one to be the great Shepherd, and others to be Princes or Shepherds under him. (*A King shal reign in righteousness & Princes shal rule in judgment.*) As in this natural body, there is a part of it formed

med in nature to be the head of it: (It is so in particular bodies, it is so in societies.) Thus is it also in Christ. In every individual seed, there is an head formed unto its particular body and members; and Christ is formed to be the head of the whole: And in every society which he begets and forms, he formeth an head for them, by the same spirit which formed him to be the head of the whole.

And here are *mountains* likewise, or a mountain, which is that (or those things) in the nature of God, from whence the whole nature of Christ did flow, and whereupon it doth depend: which is not that *love, power, wisdom, will, &c.* from whence all other things did flow, but that whereupon all these themselves depend, into which they sink and dye, and wherein they live again. All that *wisdom, power, love, will, &c.* which formed the creature, *man*; the *Jews*, the *Disciples*, sinks into this, dieth and is lost in this, and is no more to be found, but as it is received and brought forth here. Christ receiveth into himself the root of the creation, and of all dispensations in the creation, which he slayeth and offereth up as a sacrifice unto God: but his own eternal nature, life, and substance is from another root. This is very hard and mystical, and yet also very easy and plain, for *wisdom is easy to him that hath seen and understood it.*

So that all these, except the last (yea and the last too, as it is sown in the flesh: for there comes in the mystery of the sufferings and death both of Christ and of God, who was ever in union and communion both with Christ intimately, and with the creature remotely) all these I say, have their several seasons wherein they are to flourish after a sort, and then they are to dye and passe away, and can live no more, unless they be again quickened and brought forth a new. *Adam* had his day, and he dies. The *Jews* their day, and they dye; the *Disciples*

their day, and they dye also. When *Adam* is slain, he can live no more, unless he be taken into the dispensation of the Jews: When the *Jews* dye, they can live no more, unless they be taken into the dispensation of the Disciples: When the *Disciples* dye, they can live no more, unlesse they be swallowed up into the true seed. (But when the true seed dies, it is impossible that it should be held down by death, but up it gets by its own eternal spirit, raising also all that part of the creation which did suffer and dye with it.) And yet all these will be keeping up their life, and will make to themselves Shepherds, and will strive to feed upon the former mountains; which if they could truly attain to do, I confesse it would be far better for them at present, then to be so desolate as they must needs be without these: yea their very assaying and imagining that they do so, maketh their present condition more easy and pleasant; but my means hereof, it will be so much the worse for them, when they come to be stripped, judged, and broken by the Lord.

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I come now to that application promised before, which I shall not drive so deep for, but mannage with more plainness: for I confesse that these things, as they are difficult to be spoken, so they are not very easy to be understood: yet hearing the condition of some call aloud for it, my spirit travelleth to give it up. Upon this ground I speak many things, though thereby I offend many, whercin otherwise I should be wholly silent, and in that respect perhaps void of offence to any. In this application (which will be threefold) I shall wholly avoid meddling with the Shepherds, applying my self only to the sheep, partly bewailing them, (bemoaning their misery and want) and partly endeavouring to cheer and comfort them.

Use 1. Take notice of the lamentable condition of

the flock of God

God in the cloudy and dark day: (for this is the time of their misery and distress, ver. 12.) *Their Sun* is overclouded, *their light* is eclipsed, darkness overtakes them, and the effects of darkness encompass them. Take a brief review of their sad estate in these four considerations laid together.

1. They are liable to the distempers of sheep, liable to the diseases and casualties of sheep: nay not only liable, but they have them upon them. They are *diseased*, they are *sick*, they are *broken*, they are *driven away*, they are *lost*, as ver. 4. A pitiful flock.

2. In this condition they want a Shepherd to look after them. Never more need of a Shepherd, and yet never more absence and want of a Shepherd. Now they need all the offices of a Shepherd in an especial manner; They need *especial food*, *especial physic*, *especial care*, *tenderness*, and *mercifulness*: and yet now they have not so much as an ordinary Shepherd, to perform the ordinary offices of care and provision toward them.

3. In this faint and sickly condition they are *scattered* up and down. This poor weak flock are unfit to be helpful one to another, or to be helped by one another, and yet they cannot keep together to be helpful so far as they might, but their own distempers force them to seek a brood for their several reliefs.

4. In their wandring they are made a prey. They lye open to every devourer. They have no fences, no shelter in their nature. They are able to defend themselves from none, and so they are made a prey of by all the beasts of prey, which occasionally meet with them, or lye in wait for them.

O the misery of the sheep! O the desolation of the flock of God! The spirit of man, the reason of man may make some shift either to walk alone, or may find in some sort a suitable guid in that way which it inclines to.

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The sickness of man in any strain of religion is not so great, and his help or relief is more ready. But, alas, what shall the Lords sheep do! there is no health to them: no Shepherd to look after them. The reason of this dispensation of things is, in part, very plain: briefly thus. It is their *dark day*, their *cloudy day*, the time of the exercise, yea and very death of their life: but mans is not yet, but to come: therefore at present he thriveth and flourisheth in his whole course, both in his piety and in his impiety.

Use 2. O what a precious thing is a true Shepherd, a faithful Shepherd, especially in such a season! The condition of a sheep, the necessities of sheep continually call for a Shepherd. The health, the life, the safety of the sheep depends upon the Shepherd. Other creatures may make shift for themselves, but a sheep cannot be safe without a Shepherd. Yea and a true Shepherd will not leave his sheep in any distress, but will spend himself to the utmost to recover them, such is his very nature, which earnestly desireth to be able to speak the same words with Christ, in the same Spirit, *Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost none*, but that which was of necessity to be lost. That which hath not the nature of a sheep in it, cannot abide in the true fold, nor be healed when it falleth sick. (*They went out from us, because they were not of us*, saith that most tender and loving Apostle, viz. John.) A right Shepherd, in every dispensation, is a rich pearl, and he is highly favoured, who is thus blessed.

Use 3. For comfort. One word of comfort to the poor, miserable, afflicted Flock of God, in this day of their *darkness*, calamity, and distress, which is this. The Lord is the main and principal Shepherd, and his care is over his Flock, in the midst of all the carelesse of the under-shepherds; and in the midst of all which befalleth them

them thereby. The eye of the Lord is alwayes upon the Flock; he sees what becomes of them: The heart and bowels of the Lord is alwayes toward the Flock, he hath the full sense of them: He hath alwayes the nature and vigorousnesse of the heart of a Shepherd in him. Is there not very much ground of consolation in this? Consider but these three consequences which are wrapped up in it, and which flow from it.

1. Therefore, or because he is the great Shepherd, and hath the true and full nature of a Shepherd in him, therefore he cannot lose any of his Flock. If the sons of men ever were his Flock (as he saith ver. 310 *and ye my Flock, the Flock of my pasture are men*) If that people of the Jews ever were his Flock, and he did in truth bear any love unto them; If the Disciples, and Christians after them, ever were his Flock, &c. then surely he cannot possibly lose any of them, but that hold which they had in his nature, it remaineth, and will have a time to sprout up again; when all the cloudy and dark daies are over. He blameth these Shepherds here for letting the sheep wander and be lost, and will he himself lose any? No, he will not, he cannot; but his very spirit and nature engageth him to seek out all which they have lost, and to recover it, ver. 11. *For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, I will both search my sheep, and seek them out.*

2. Therefore, or for the same reason, he will heal and restore them all. All that they have suffered by the negligence of the other Shepherds, shall be made up by him, ver. 12. *As a Shepherd seeketh out his Flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

3. He will provide for them, as a Shepherd, both good, safe, and pleasant food, and safe and sweet rest, ver. 13. 14. 15. *And I will bring them out from the people,*
and

and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my Flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. When the Lord hath destroyed all his unfaithful under-Shepherds, and taken upon him his own proper office of looking to his sheep, O how well will it go with them! And then all their loss will become their gain: for mark this. When affliction or misery is drunk up, ensuing happiness becomes the greater for it. Sweet taste sweetest after bitter: and is it not fit that the greatest sweetness should have the greatest bitterness preceding and making way for it? Is it not so in every nature and state of things? Doth not every kind of sweetness require it? Sweetness is it, which would not much abate of its excellency, were it not for the foregoing bitterness? This is the great ground of the misery in this present various state of things, which if we were able to pierce thoroughly into, it would satisfy.

THE ESTATE OF CHRISTS KINGDOM

at his Coming,

*As it is represented in the parable of the
Wise and Foolish Virgins;*

MATTH. 25. from vers. 1. to 13.

VER. 1. *Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.*



Hen. When Christ shall come to judge the World, and especially his Church, according to that Gospel which he and his Apostles after him preached to it: for that is the time here intended, and largely treated of in the former chapter, wherein the suddenness of it, and the danger of being surprised is much pressed, as ver. 36. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only.* Again ver. 42. and so on. *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* But

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know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up: Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh. Now to what end their care and watch should be, is also expressed, namely, that they be not overtaken, with the sinful Spirit and practices of the world, nor negligent about their own business, but walking faithfully and industriously in, and according to the light and Spirit of the Gospel, ver. 45. 46. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? (as if the Lord would intimate, that the first persons he would call to this strict account, were the Shepherds of Israel.) Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. This is the time that this ensuing parable is to be applied to, which is plainly expressed in this word *Then*.

Shall the Kingdom of Heaven. The Church of Christ, or the New Testament Church, is by Christ (in his parables) frequently stiled the Kingdom of Heaven. It is called a *Kingdom*, because therein he, or God in him, reigns: Indeed therein is true Kingly power, true reigning, and true subjection. It is called *the Kingdom of Heaven*, because it is all created, all begotten, all from above: Of a Spirit from above, of a life from above, of a life from above: yea and it is in itself of a most Heavenly nature. It came from Heaven, it tends toward Heaven, and it is Heavenly in itself. It is not an earthly Kingdom, (it is in no wise like the Kingdoms of this earth) *my Kingdom is not of this world*: but an Heavenly Kingdom. The Church was so in God's institution, nay it was really so in its first constitution, when it came newly out of the fingers of his Spirit; I say, God's Church was so: but man's Church, or that which

which man sets up for Gods Church, is nothing lesse.

Belikened. The estate of Christs Church (or Kingdom on earth) at his coming, shall be answerable to this resemblance here annexed. Christ had deciphered before the estate of the world, or the condition wherein the world generally should be found at his coming, ver. 37. 38. and 39. of the former chapter. *But as the dayes of Noë were,* so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as the dayes that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noë entred into the Ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man. This shall be the state of the world, They shall be drowned in the Spirit and affairs of the world, and ignorant of the approach of him, who is making hast to steal upon them, with that judgment and vengeance which his Spirit hath all along foretold them. Thus they shall stand ready prepared for the judgment and slaughter, which shall take them at unawares, as the flood did the old world. But there are some that pretend to another Spirit, yea some that are indeed of another Spirit: for the Spirit of the Lord can beget, preserve, and bring up his Church and holy seed, though they may not be such as the world calleth so, but such as are hidden from the world, both by their own weaknesses, and the darknesse of this present age; yet Christ taketh notice of these also, and representeth what their state likewise shall be at or about this time.

Unto ten Virgins. Virginity is the proper estate of those that are unmarried. Christ createth, purchaseth, sanctifieth unto himself a spouse, which spouse is to remain a virgin until Christ cometh to marry her: *thus I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*, saith the Apostle. A Virgin is one who hath not married; A chaste

virgin is one who, so much as in her thoughts, hath not desired any but her own love. Christ desires none but his spouse, and his spouse desires none but him. She may be tempted and allured to cast her eye upon others, but her heart desireth them not, nor can she go out after them. *These are they which were not defiled with women: for they are virgins.* The rest of the world either prostitute themselves, or seek after strange lovers, or are won to let in strangers, and become polluted by them: these alone retain the virginity of their Spirits for Christ.

As the state of marriage is a type of the souls union to, conjunction with, and enjoyment of Christ: so the state of a virgin is a type of its condition of expectancy untill that time, wherein it is to keep its Spirit pure and clean for him, and not have the least hankering after any other: For she that doth so much as look on another to lust after him, hath deflowered her virginity, having committed adultery in her heart. This same pure virgin alone hath the single eye, which it keeps fixed upon the lamb, following him whithersoever he goes. It regards nothing but the pure life, it hates this world and all relations (yet knoweth how to honour and give them their due more then any) yea it hateth its own self most of all: It cannot endure the light or teachings of any Spirit, wherein is not the nature of its own life. The rest of the world may dote on inspirations, illuminations, and instructions from Spirits, it abhorreth them, and waiteth for the voice of her husband alone, not knowing the voice of any stranger, how specious or needfull soever.

The typical state of virginity hath been much honoured by most sorts, and not altogether without cause; for it is not only beautiful to the eye of flesh, but is also truly honourable in it self, and hath this advantage over the other, in that it affordeth more freedom to the ser-

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vice of Christ: But yet he that shal prefer it in it self above the estate of marriage, wherewith it is but equal, maketh way for its dishonour: for God will be righteous to principles, as well as to persons. Both these estates are of a common nature in themselves, and both are equally sanctified by the life when it appeareth. It mattereth not there at all whether one be bond or free, male or female, married or unmarried. Life is not advanced by these things, nor can it be hindered by these things. They may indeed make a great noise and appearance in the fleshly Spirit (and they may be of some benefit or impediment, according to the estate or condition of a person here in the flesh), but they are nothing before God. And because marriage is so dishonoured by the fleshly Spirit of man, let me speak one thing in way of its renown, it hath this honour given it by God, to be the greater type. *Virginity* is only a type of the life in its weakness and emptiness, *marriage* is a type of it in its full strength and enjoyment. He that knoweth how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, as the Gentiles which know not God, cannot call that common which the Lord hath sanctified. Indeed to the clean in heart every thing is clean, but to our polluted Spirits all things are unclean: and because we want the true purity of the Spirit, therefore are we faine to seek about in things of the flesh, wherein we endeavour to make a purity and impurity (to the accommodating of the fleshlinesse of our minds) in things that are not.

Which took their Lamps. A Lamp is a light which is kindled and fed with oil to give light in the night. There is heat in a Lamp as well as light, but the service and use of a Lamp is not in respect of its heat, but of its light: And the chief benefit of this light is in the night season; for in the day when the light of the Sun appeareth,

eth, it overcometh the light of the Lamp, and maketh it unserviceable. Christ, who is the great Sun of righteousness, setteth up Lamps in the Spirits of his people, whereby he giveth light to them, and shineth upon the world at his pleasure, all the time of the night. The night is the whole time of this world, till the coming of Christ in life and glory. From Adams fall (if not before: for the best of mans day may be termed, Christs night) till Christs appearing in the life and glory of the Father, is night. There have been as it were daies between whiles to some, yet even those daies have been part of this night. The very light of Christ in the flesh, and of his Apostles after him in and through the Spirit, did not make day, no not to them, but were only brighter Lamps in the night. The night, saith the Apostle, is far spent, the day is at hand, but it is not to come, no not to us, for so his following exhortation directly implieth: let us therefore, saith he, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Now as there are Lamps and Candles for the use of the eyes of this body in the natural night: so are there Lamps for the use of the Spirits of such as are spiritual, in this spiritual night. That which Christ overcometh man by, is his light. (As Satan conquers by darkness, so Christ by light.) What doth he beget, but a child of light? And whither doth he bring him forth, but into the light? And though he leave him in this dark world for a season, yet he leaveth him not in darkness, but setteth up a Lamp or light in him to be his guid.

Now what is this light, or Lamp, but that particular knowledg of the truth, which God sets up in particular souls? That light of the nature of Christ, which any man hath received from Christ into himself, this is his Lamp to light him by: This, refreshed by oil from the Spirit, burneth clearly, and is able to light the soul in its

whole

whole course, yea and also to cast light round about. This Lamp is vigorous, having light in every part of it, and giving light from every part of it. In the whole body of the new man there is the light of life. All shines, and gives light. Faith shines, Hope shines, Patience shines, Meekness shines, Humility shines, Obedience shines, every good work shines, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* Every grace, every spiritual motion (in a sense) is a Lamp; for it hath the true Oil, the true light, and the true life in it. So that all the strains and shootings forth of holiness and Heavenliness in Christians, are as so many Lamps, to light the blind world to behold the excellency of Christ in them, from whence, alone, these things spring up and flourish. And the more eminent any one is in knowledge, and in strictness of life and conversation, so much the greater lights are they, *John was a burning and a shining light.*

These Lamps are to give light three waies. First in their own Spirits. Secondly in the Church. And thirdly in the world. They are to give light to themselves, and to their brethren in the spirit, and to their brethren in the flesh.

1. *In their own Spirits.* They are to live in the light, to walk in the light: not to move any way at adventures, or in the light of the flesh, but in the true light of the knowledge of Christ. As they are delivered from darkness, from their own carnal reason, which is darkness: so they are to return no more unto it, but to live and walk after that new Lamp which is lighted in them by God through Christ. (It is true, no man can advance himself to this state; but he who hath this Lamp set up in him by Christ, is by him advanced to it.)

2. Their light is to shine *in the Church*: For, though there are more particular lights there, which are more particu-

particularly to shine; yet all being lights, all are to shine. All are to have knowledge, grace, and life, and the knowledge, grace and life of all is to shine.

They are to shine in the world. They are to hold forth the Name and Nature of Christ in their whole course in the world, that the world may see the beauty of Gods holiness and excellency in them, that the world may be forced to acknowledg, that notwithstanding their weakneses, whereto this fleshly state exposeth them, yet there is a more excellent Spirit at bottome in them, and a light and power issuing forth from them; which is not to be found in the world.

Now these Lamps the virgins take, which took their Lamps. When the soul is new-formed, and hath that light set up in it by the Spirit of Christ, whereby it is to work and to walk, Then immediately it takes up this light, walking in it, going forth to work with it, and being clothed with it, it waits for the coming of Christ, who expects to find it burning and shining; for he did not light it and set it up in them, to be hid there as under a bushel, but that it might shine and give light. It is of this that Christ will take the great account at his coming (as the next parable in this same chap. expresseth) for this is his talent, this is the talent of his nature, the talent of his dispensed life (whereas all other talents are but the talents of some inferior nature, or of some inferior dispensed life) this therefore they apply themselves to furnish up and prepare against his coming. If this hath been lost, or corrupted, or hath lain idle and not been made use of, O, wo unto them! Wo, wo unto such Disciples! How will that Disciple be able to hold up his head before Christ, by whom that light, which Christ hath lighted in him, is trusted away. The virgins know this very well, and therefore still when they look upon the coming of Christ as neer, they trim their lamps.

And went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Having their Lamps with them, having their Lamps lighted and burning, they may with confidence and comfort meet their Saviour. There is no soul which hath not his Lamp lighted, but would tremble at the coming of Christ: but happy is he who hath the true light of life shining in him, and who walketh faithfully in the truth of his own dispensation!

This going forth to meet Christ, is not a bodily but spiritual motion, even as the coming of Christ is not bodily, but spiritual. For Christs coming must needs be spiritual, seeing his very bodily substance is to come only in the spirit (*viz.* as it is made spiritual, and clothed with the spirit: *Y* such therefore will their going forth to meet him chiefly be. There is none can meet Christ, but he that meeteth him with his spirit. The flesh will run away from Christ, yea Christ himself will be a stranger to all, and all will be strangers to him, who are not one nature and spirit with him. O how the whole bulk of *fleshy Israel* desires the presence of the *Messiah*, as they imagine! It is their great prayer, *O that the Messiah would once come!* Thus it is with old fleshy-Israel: yea and new fleshy-Israel, is as eager after the coming of that, which it takes to be Christ: But they will both equally run from the truth of his nature and spirit when he appeareth, for he is death to them both. The Virgins alone, who know the nature of Christ in the truth and spirit of it, they alone can truly desire his coming, and go forth to meet him. It is this spirit alone which can truly get out of this world, and ascend to meet his spirit. For when Christ cometh, he ariseth out of his holy habitation in Heaven; he cometh from the Father into this world: he therefore that in his spirit ascendeth out of this world, toward the Father, he meeteth Christ.

VER. 2. *And five of them were wise, and five foolish.*

Wisdom and folly is every where mixed in all things and states, even in the very Kingdom of God; among the very Virgins. There is, even there, a deep solid spirit of wisdom, and a shallow empty spirit of folly. And as it is in this world, he that is foolish, and doth not order his affairs according to the reason, understanding, and course of nature, must needs fall short of those effects which are only produced thereby: so is it here also. *Many run the race, but few are so wise as to cast their business so as to obtain the prize. Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Observe it, observe it, is it not of mighty importance? Among the Virgins one half are foolish! Among those that are separated, sanctified, lighted by God; such as are reckoned, even by him, of his Kingdom, such as none can distinguish, such as go out with their Lamps, to meet the Bridegroom: such as have tasted of the Heavenly gift, who have by faith fed on Christ, and have been full of love to their fellow-Virgins, from the light which God hath kindled and set up in them; and which go forth with this knowledge, with this faith, with this love, with their Lamps burning and shining to meet the Bridegroom, yet one half of these are foolish! Among four sorts of grounds, that receive the seed, ther's but one good; and of that one good ther's half nought!

Now this is the reason of their miscarriage, as it is intimated here, and more fully expressed afterward. *viz.* their folly. *Adam* tell, because he was a fool. (It is true, he was wise in his own line, even with the wisdom of God: yet the Lord who made him, was able to find weakness and folly in his nature, as well as in his Angels.) *Christ* stood because he was wise, his root was able to

to feed and uphold him with wisdom. When Satan came to tempt him, he could find nothing in him to fasten upon; *The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.* And this is the reason of the miscarriage of all in all dispensations; namely, for want of a thorow participation with Christ in his root. The seed of life, where it enters into the spirit and doth truly embody with it, there it maketh radically wise: but where the nature and wisdom of God is only let down upon the soul, and remaineth still a distinct thing, so that there is only an influence of it upon the spirit or into the spirit, and not a compleat union; there the nature of this spirit is still a fool, and will at last be found faulty in the principal part of wisdom. The former have a radical wisdom, from the root of life in their spirits, which overcomes their radicall folly, and makes them truly wise in the nature and motions of life: The latter have a radical folly, which comprehendeth not the true wisdom of that dispensation, whereby they are for the present as it were gathered out of the world into God, and so they are still fools in the midst of all their spiritual light and wisdom, and must needs grossly miscarry and miss in the end.

VER. 3. *They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no oyl with them.*

The folly of the foolish, or the nature and kind of their folly is here expressed, in that they took their Lamps without oyl, or they took not that oyl which was sufficient to feed their Lamps with light till the coming of Christ. They had oyl in their Lamps, or else their Lamps could not have burned at all; They had the anointing (they cannot go for Virgins whose Lamps burn with any other oyl then the anointing of God: but they had not enough of it: They had not such a vessel full of

it, as could not be drawn dry. And this was their folly, to think because they had their Lamps burning at present, by a little oyl from the spirit, that this would last till the coming of Christ: No, they should have looked after a Fountain of Oyl which could not be wasted. Light drinks up oyl apace, and if there be not a constant supply, the light must needs out.

VER. 4. *But the Wise took oyl in their vessels with their Lamps.*

He that is wise, so casts his business that he may carry it through, laies such a foundation, as is able to sustain his whole building; so reckons his cost, that he may go through with his work and not be laughed at; makes his peace with his adversary in the way, that he may not be in danger of him afterward; seeks after water enough to quench his thirst, bread sufficient to satisfy his hunger, oyl enough to keep his Lamp burning. The fool is slight, as his spirit is slight, and any thing serves his turn: but the wise is serious and weighty, his eye is upon the end, and his heart is ever seeking out that which will endure to, and attain the end. *But the Wise took oyl in their vessels with their Lamps.* They took their Lamps, and there was oyl in their Lamps, their Lamps were burning as brightly as the Lamps of the foolish: but with all they considered that this was not enough, their Lamps would require a further supply of oyl, then that wherewith they were fed at present; and therefore they make provision for the future, by taking *oyl in their vessels*. They went with their hearts full of the fountain of life and light in them, to feed that Lamp which was already lighted to light themselves by, and to give light to others by. This was it which Christ himself had, and which hath been the safety of all his elect, namely, their true union with the spirit of
that

that life from whence they proceeded, who hath still fed their natures with that light, with that life, and with that oyl, which the condition of its estate hath required. Hence it was that they could never dye, nor be overcome by darknes; because they have had that Fountain of Life and light in them, which is able to overcome and triumph over death and darknes: so that all the death and darknes wherewith at sometimes they have seemed utterly overwhelmed, makes but way for the liberty and power of their life, and for the bright-shining glory of their light. He that hath the true nature in him, hath also the true spirit in and with that nature, nurturing up, feeding and cherishing into its own proper estate and inheritance of blessedness. *He that beleeveth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* And again, *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* There was a typical representation of this, in that great dispensation of the Gospel by Christ and his Apostles: and there will be a full manifestation of it, in that full breaking forth of the Gospel which is to come: but the nature of the things hath alwaies equal truth in it, even when it is most hid from the eye of sense.

VER. 5. *While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

The Bridegroom disappoints them all: They go forth to meet him, but he doth not come; nay he tarrieth, he delayeth his coming. Christ is very quick according to the measure of his own spirit, but very slow according to the measure of flesh, yea and according to the measure of the spirits of his people in the flesh. So that when they look on the day of the Lord in the Spirit of the Lord

they behold it very neer, even at the dores, and cry out *He comes, he comes*, he will be here in a moment, he is just upon you already: but when they come back again into their own spirits here in the flesh, then they stand amazed at his long stay. It is not only the evil servant that faith in his heart, *My Lord delayeth his coming*: but the spirit of the good servant is also often crying out, *Lord, how long! how long!* Christ makes not that hast to come which the Virgins expect he should, he comes not so soon as they understand, his promise is that he will come: nay at the very time when he is most assuredly expected and is a coming; yet even then he delayeth, coming not so soon as either the foolish or wise Virgins verily believe he will.

Hereupon all *slumber*, nay *sleep*, both the wise and the foolish. The wise are wearied out with expectation, as well as the foolish: and being tired with long watching in this dark night, they fall a slumbering, nay, they fall into a direct sleep. *When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?* No surely, he will find the very faith of the wise Virgins a sleep. The eye of faith will not be open to entertain Christ, when he comes with the reward of faith.

Slumbering is the heaviness or drowfiness of the senses, *sleep* is the binding of them up. As every one, in every dispensation, hath a new life, is a new man, &c. So he hath a new appetite, new senses, a new heart, a new understanding, a new eye. It is the new man that is to walk with God, in this or that dispensation whereunto he is created, and wherein he is placed. In the Gospel, it is the new man according to the Gospel, that is to do the work of Christ, and to wait for the coming of Christ: yet as the leaven of the Gospel is to leaven and overspread the old man also, and as the old man (or fleshly nature) is to partake with the new man in the crown: so

is it likewise to be subject to it, and to work and wait with it. Now though the spirit of it self be willing, yet it is weak in and through the flesh: insomuch as the new life and spirit, if it be not continually rowfed up and quickened, will be apt to grow slothfull and sleepy. And this weakness, by long continuance and over-bearing of the frail spirit, doth come to prevail universally; not only over the foolish Virgins, but also over the wise; and not only in some small degree, but very far: not only to slumbring, but even to sleep it self: *While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbred and slept.*

VER. 6. *And at midnight there was a crie made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.*

At midnight, in the dead dismal time of the night, the time of deep sleep, when the natural spirit is generally at rest, and the mischievous spirit, or the spirit that intends surprize is only at work, when all the Virgins were fast a sleep, near to much as thinking of the Bridegroom or his coming, then Christ cometh, stealing not only upon the world, but upon them also. Christ hastens not his coming for the Virgins being awake and expectation of him, nor doth he defer his coming for their being a sleep, but he proceedeth only according to the line of light in himself.

At midnight. It is night continually to the world in respect of the spiritual light of Christ. It is night to the Church when their Sun is Eclipsed, when the light of their dispensation is withdrawn. After this light hath been long withdrawn, and darkness hath much overtaken them, then it is deep night, then it is midnight. Then it is no working, nay watching it self grows erksome, and every thing is inclined to sleep. Nay it is not only midnight to them, but to the world also: for the world

world it self hath a kind of day from the light of the dispensations of Christ : for the Church is a light or city on an hill , which hath not only light within its own wals, but also giveth light to the world.

At t'is time , there was a crie made , there was a sound or noise which waked all the Virgins : There was a loud voice saying , *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh*, This voice was to the Virgins , not to the world : This voice was to rouse up the Virgins , not the world. Christ was not willing to find them in this deep sleep , and therefore he takes care to wake them by this great out-crie, *Behold, the Bridegroom comes*. Awake, awake, up Virgins , out of your beds for shame, look abroad, behold the Bridegroom is just upon you.

Go ye out to meet him. What will ye not step one step toward the Bridegroom, who is marching so hastily, and with so great love toward you ? Go out for shame ? Go out of this world ? Go out of your own Spirits ? Go ye forth out of the secret holes and chambers wherein ye have been hid ? Come out into the open aire to meet the Lord your Bridegroom, your Husband ? Your long-absent husband is coming to be married to you , he is upon his march toward you , behold he comes ! what will ye let him steal upon you , and find you snorting ? Awake, arise, go forth and meet him ?

VER. 7. *Then all those Virgins arose , and trimmed their Lamps.*

This sound, this cry, waked all these Virgins, and when they awaked they arise, shaking off al that drowfiness and sleep which had surprised and overtaken them , and set about trimming of their Lamps. In the time of their sleep their Lamps were not looked after , so that they either went out , or at least burnt very dimly, for want of refreshing

freshing with oyl. This is the great danger of sleep, it is the time of the enemies advantage (*while the good man sleeps, the enemy sowed tares*) it is the time of the wasting of that light and life of the spirit, which is given forth in any dispensation: for that which growes and thrives by care and watchfulness, must needs decay without it. There is no running on of the race, while the spirit is a sleep. But now the Virgins, being wonderfully by the goodness of God waked out of their sleep, look immediately to their Lamps, to put them in a good and bright posture, fit for the eye of their Lord.

Yea the sweetness and kindness of Christ deserves further observation, in that the sleeping of the Virgins doth not tend more to their prejudice. Christ considered their weakness, and as he said concerning his Disciples when he was here in the flesh, whom he had commanded to watch with him, *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*: so hath he the same heart still, and will be as tender to his Disciples now. It is the want of oyl, the want of a Lamp burning, the want of the true knowledg of Christ and of life within, which causeth him to disown any. Christ, when he cometh with love and kindness to cover all weaknesses, cannot be strict with the darlings of his soul, because he finds them overcome through weakness, in this their estate of weakness. It is want of truth in the inner parts, in the nature of the spirit, in the nature of the life, which alone enrageth Christ against those which pretend unto him. If any man have not the nature of Christ, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ (I mean among the Virgins, for he doth not expect either of these from the world) if any man be an hypocrite in the nature of his spirit, him Christ cannot but abhor and turn from, as he doth afterward from the foolish Virgins, ver. 12.

VER. 8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.*

Now the foolish Virgins find want of oyl. Now they feel what it is to want the spirit of wisdom, or the nature of wisdom in their spirits. They thought they were well enough provided, and that the wise Virgins were over-sollicitous about that which needed not, in endeavouring to furnish themselves with so much oyl: but now they meet with instruction to the contrary, by experience somewhat too late. This is the lot of the foolish, They make a great bluster with their Lamps, which burn gloriously and make a very fair shew, at present: but when Christ comes, then they want oyl to feed them with, then their Lamps are out; then they are to seek for that which should make them acceptable to him at his coming, and so dare not appear in his presence. Ther's no refreshing a Lamp that's going out, ther's no renewing a Lamp that's gone out, vvithout oyl. This the foolish understand vvell enough, and therefore have recourse to the vvise for some of their oyl; but the oyl of the vvise is not for the foolish.

VER. 9. *But the wise answered, saying, Lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sel, and buy for your selves.*

There is no parting with ones own oyl, *Buy the truth, and sell it not.* That oyl vvhich is given to every particular Virgin for himself, he may not part vvith to another. We may light others by our Lamp, vve may let them light their Lamp at ours, but not part vvith our oyl to them. Our ovvn anointing is only for our ovvn Lamp. God vvho hath given to every one his Lamp, hath given him

him wisdom to seek for his proportion of oyl, and hath proportioned his oyl unto him. He were a foolish Virgin, who would part with any of his oyl, having none to spare, therefore the wise Virgins, who are to be free universally, but especially in spiritual things, utterly refuse this motion, as being against the will of their Lord, and the nature of their life; advising them to go for it, there where it is to be had; and not expect it from them who have it not to give.

VER. 10. *And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.*

While the foolish Virgins are fitting themselves for the Bridegroom, the Bridegroom comes: and when the Bridegroom comes, he takes in only them to the marriage with him that are ready (*The Marriage of the Lamb is come, and his Wife hath made her self ready*) excluding the rest. To her he gives the Wedding Garment (*Rev. 19. ver. 8.*) and in she goes with him: but the foolish Virgins are out of the way of life and blessednesse when Christ comes with it. The door is shur, and the foolish Virgins may not come in among the children, but must stay without among the dogs, *for without are dogs*, and all manner of outward unclean things, yea and whatsoever hath loved and made a lye in stead of the truth. *blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb*: but miserable is the condition of the foolish Virgins, who are turned out among the rest of the world for want of light, for want of truth. Here are four things very observable, and vvorthy of deep consideration and meditation, vvhich I shall only point at.

1. The unseasonable preparation of the foolish Virgins for the Bridegroom. When they should meet the Bride-

groom, to welcome and entertain him, and to enter into the fulness of life with him; then they are seeking for that wherewith they should entertain him; and whereby alone they may appear acceptable in his presence.

2. The uninterrupted progress of the Bridegroom. He doth not stay while they make themselves ready, but he proceeds on, and comes though they be unready.

3. The happiness of the wise Virgins, or the happiness of the Bride, which is ready to meet and entertain her Husband: she goeth in with him to the marriage, she partakes with him in his Kingdom, life, and fullness.

4. The utter exclusion of the foolish Virgins, and of all others. When the wise, when all that are to enter into life are entered in, the door is shut; and they that afterward assay to enter, do it to no purpose. He that shutteth the gate of Heaven, understandeth what he doth, and will not be prevailed with to open it again.

VER. 11. *Afterward came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*

Behold the confidence of the foolish Virgins! They make no question but to be entertained by Christ, but to be owned by him as his spouse. They are Virgins, they have Lamps, they come with their Lamps to the door of the Kingdom, and they know no reason why Christ should not open to them, nor cannot have the least suspicion that he will not. This is the nature of spiritual folly, it will keep up the height of confidence to the very last. The wise Virgins look narrowly to it, that they may be sure to buy the true Pearl, that they may by no means fail of the true treasure: but the foolish Virgins make up their defect of truth with the superabundance of confidence, which abideth with them to the very last,
till

till it avail to cast them into the bed of abiding sorrow, which all sparks of light and life which are not of the Lords nature and kindling, most naturally and necessarily lead unto.

VER. 12. *But he answered, and said; Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

Christ hath full as good ground for his confidence, as they for their's, and he is as resolute in disclaiming them, as they can be in looking for entertainment from him. *Verily I know you not*, saith Christ. Ye say ye know me as your Husband, but I do not know you as my spouse: and be as confident as ye will of your interest in me, yet ye shall find this true, that I do not know you, nor cannot receive you. I have my line given me by my Father, according to which I am to proceed, and within which ye come not, whatever ye have thought, or yet may think of your selves. Ye have now got oyl; but I know neither you, nor your oyl. Ye are now qualified, as yee think, with the light and life of my Spirit: But I know neither your light, nor your life. Foolish yee have been from the beginning, and folly must bee your end; *I know you not, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* This is not the judgment of another, whom ye would be apt to despise, but my own judgment. This is the sentence of my own heart concerning you, which I deliver with my own lips unto you: and I speak not to you in any way of trial, but I tell you the very truth as it is, *Verily I say unto you.* Ye have had hints of this before from the wise Virgins, who were not one with you in their Spirits and in their waies, but ye were able to bear up your heads against them: and now yee

come confidently to mee with the very same thing, which my Spirit in them had before discarded. They often told you, that for all this great lustre and glory, this was not the true Spirit of the Lord, this was not the true nature of life, &c. and yet yee could not receive their testimony, nor consider them, but have gone on with this Spirit and with this life, and now think to be owned by me, and that I will open to you the door of the Kingdom, which of a truth I cannot do, for *Verily I do not know you.* Ye are not of me, and therefore cannot have communion with me. Here is no place for you, my Nature, my Spirit, the life of the Lord in me will not suffer me to admit you hither. The Father would not have entrusted mee with the honour of this great commission of life and death, if I could have been bribed with false appearances. Therefore away from mee, yee foolish Virgins, Put off your Garments of Light and Salvation (at length lay aside these ungrounded hopes and confidences) and enter in at the gates of destruction into the chambers of death, where is your portion. Ah what lamentable weeping and vvailling vvill there be over this vain Spirit, vvhen it is too late. Then vvill the foolish Virgins hang dovvn their heads, and be as much ashamed of their infallible certainties and assurances, as they have hither to lifted up their heads, and boasted because of them. Then they vvill as much vvish that they had had vvarnings (more frequent vvarnings, more close vvarnings) as they are now vveary of them, and think the life of their Spirits injured by them.

But to vvhat end are many vvords? Surely there is no dealing vvith them. Whatsoever is or can be said, in the mean time, is but like vvater spilt upon

on the ground. And indeed, vvhat can vvarn them from death and destruction, or from the gavvdy appearances of life and spirituality in stead of the truth, vvhoſe very nature leadeth them thereto, and entangleth them therein? He vvvas not ignorant of their nature, ſpirit courſe and end, vvho hath foreſpoken theſe things, and left upon record this testimony concerning them.

BRIEF

BRIEF OBSERVATIONS

On part of the first Chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, but chiefly on those verses which concern the great Rest or Salvation, and the great Trouble or Destruction, both which are, in the end, to be impartially opened and dispensed.

2 THESSAL. CHAP. I.

VER. 2. *Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*



HE great Fountain of the New Life is God, The great Wel wherein this Fountain resides is *Christ*. Or, *Christ* is the Fountain, and *God* is the Well (for so largely abundant is the same Nature, Life, and Spirit in both, and so strait is the union between both, that it holds good both vvaies.) From God and Christ, from God in Christ, or from Christ in God, the seed, growvth, and perfection of all life and blessedness doth issue.

Grace

Grace and Peace are the two attendants of the new life, the channells in which it runs, the garments wherein it is wrapped, and whereby it is known: nay indeed they partake of the very inward nature of it, insomuch as the very life it self may be seen, tasted, known, and enjoyed in them. According to the efflux of these from God, is the straitness or abundance of life and delight in the heart. There is no more needfull to the being of life but the presence of these: and there is no more needfull to the abundance of life, but the abundant increase of these. Where these are and abound, there is *faith* and *love*, *holiness* and *joy*, and every sweet spirituall temper and thing. These two streams of the sweetness of the Gospel, doth the Apostle still wish to believers fresh from the Fountain.

VER. 3. *We are bound to thank God alwaies for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.*

The seed of life, when it was first sown, did grow abundantly, until the ears became ripe to the harvest, and God had reaped that crop. *Faith and love, light and obedience* did abound in the Churches of Christ. There were indeed many tares, but there was also much good corn. There were such as from the nature of Christ did receive and own the Life and Spirit of Christ, and did feel know and love it in each other: and this not in a low mean way, but in such a lively powerfull way, as shined not only in the Churches, but round about also. *Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.*

The heart of man is removed from God (and the nature of God is hidden from man) so that he cannot he

dares not trust him. No man can truly beleeeve, but he that is born anew. In whom the seed of this faith is sown, in him it may grow, accordingly as it is dressed and watered from above. The blessing of God upon this first age, or generation of Christians, was very great, which made them very rich and fruitfull in faith.

Now where there is the same seed of life sown, where there is the same nature and Spirit of Faith, there is a secret kind of knowledg of one another, and of love towards each other, which the more this life cometh to be discovered in any, the more this love groweth and aboundeth towards them. And as this life is of an excellent nature; so is the love also, even such as the world cannot know: but they who have it may know it, and may be distinguished among themselves thereby: *By this shall ye know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.* Indeed either this faith or love will discover who are Christs, for none else can thus beleeeve in God, or love one another. Yet both this faith and love (with the whole powers and operations of this life) may easily be vailed in this dark world, so as none but a very piercing eye may be able to discover them, but in their proper time and season they will manifest themselves.

VER. 4. *So that we our selves glory in you in the Churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.*

This life, exercising this faith and love, This new creature, walking in this new strain of holiness, wil meet with *persecutions* from the world, and with *tribulations* not only from thence, but also from spiritual enemies, yea even from God himself, who will still be casting them into the fire to purify them. So that they have great need of *patience* to bear these things, and of *faith* to feed
and

and maintain patience, that they do not faint nor be driven from their hold thereby. Now to see this life thus bear up in the midst of all storms, is matter of great joy to all who have an interest and fellowship in the same life, but most especially to those who were the planters and waterers thereof.

VER. 5. *Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.*

This their patience and faith in bearing persecutions and afflictions, is a testimony or manifest token that they shall have the *Kingdom*. It evidenceth that there is somewhat for which they suffer thus; and that God who hath put them to suffering for these things, will also bring them to that for which they have thus suffered. He having set them this path, to run through persecutions and tribulations to the Kingdom, and they having trod this track, surely he will look upon them as worthy of that Kingdom and glory, which they have undergone all this for. He that runs the race, is worthy of the prize. He that takes up and bears the cross and misery propounded for the crown, is worthy of that crown which is the proper reward thereof. But there is more in it then so; for the cross doth purify, prepare for, and make worthy of the crown: and therefore doth God so many waies scourge and afflict his seed, that he might every way make them worthy of that inheritance of life prepared of them.

VER. 6. *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you.*

There are two seeds, viz. *The seed of the Woman*, and

the seed of the Serpent: the one whereof is still the persecutor, the other the persecuted: the one the troubler, the other the troubled. God lets them alone thus at present, both because by this different temper they are to act their different parts now, and also because he hath appointed a time of recompense, wherein he will trouble that troublesome Spirit, which from the beginning all along hath been so injurious to the righteous and holy nature of his seed, and would never suffer them to rest.

And this God looketh upon himself as engaged in righteousness to do; which firm intention and resolution of Gods makerh his present dispensation of things righteous, which would not be so, did they not refer to a future end. For if the present misery of the holy seed did not work out their happiness, and if the present happiness of the wicked did not work out their misery, it could not be righteous to let things be as they are on either hand. It is not the present estate, but the additament which God hath to put into the scales, which will make all things even.

VER. 7. 8. *And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels.*

In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of the our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who are now troubled shall not ever be troubled, for God will one day give them rest: yea he will recompense it to them, he will give it them as the reward of their trouble. As he will recompense tribulation to the troublers, so he will recompense rest to the troubled.

And this rest ye shall have *with us*, saith the Apostle.
Christ

Christ sits down with God; *Christ* is recompensed with God; who suffered in his death, and reigns in his reign. *Christ*, after his course of trouble, hath rest with God: the Apostles, after their course, have rest with *Christ*; and all the Disciples following have rest with *Christ* and his Apostles. As they all drink of the same cup; as they are all baptised with the same baptism: so they all inherit the same Crown.

The time, when this rest shall be given out and enjoyed, is punctually expressed, namely, *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven*. *Christ* was taken up into Heaven, and hid there. Thither do his Disciples follow him with their faith; having all their trade and conversation in Heaven: and from thence do they expect to have him come to them again. *Our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*, Plil. 3. 20. And not without good ground, for *Christ* had expressly told them that he would send his Angels, nay, he would come himself to gather them out of this earth unto himself, that they might be with him. *I go to prepare a place for you; And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto my self, that where I am, there ye may be also*, Joh. 14. ver. 2, 3. *Christ* was let down and manifested here below; He was also taken up and hid again: He shall yet come again, he shall be revealed again; and when he is revealed again, then shall these things be: Then shall the seed of the Serpent be troubled, and the seed of the woman have rest.

The manner of this his coming, or revealing, is described divers waies, as, First by his attendants, *his mighty Angels*. He shall come gloriously attended, bringing with him his mighty instruments of power to do his pleasure: He shall but speak the word; and he shall have enow about him ready and sufficient to execute it. Se-

condly, by the instrument of his wrath, *fire*, the most penetrating, the most dreadfull thing to the nature of the creation; *flaming fire*; fire already kindled and blown up by the breath of the Lord, fire already prepared to burn, scorch and torment, as he pleaseth to give it command. Thirdly, by the end of it; The end of his coming, after this manner, is to take or yeild *vengeance*, to powre out all that wrath upon his enemies, which hitherto he hath been but threatning.

Now there are two sorts whom Christ will deale with at his coming, or two sorts on whom he will take vengeance. First, such as *know not God*: Such as have not learned him by his works, by his Scriptures, by the Revelation of his Gospel: Such as have sat *in darkness*, and *in the shadow of death*, not having understood him (in any of those waies whereby he hath pleased to reveal himself) nor the Law of their own Natures from him; but, in stead thereof have said in the Heart and Nature of their Spirits, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledg of thy waies*. Every Creature speaks out God (or at least whispers him) even to the ear that is in man: Man takes no notice thereof, he hears not this voice, but remains ignorant of him: God lets him alone at present, but he will have a time to reckon with all the men upon the face of the earth for these things. Secondly, such as *obey not the Gospel*, that is, *beleeve not on his Son*, receive not *repentance and remission* of sins from his Son (who is a *Prince and Saviour* appointed by God to hold them forth and dispense them freely) give not themselves up to the dispose of his Son: Such as refuse the guidance of his Spirit, that will not let in that light which he by the Gospel holds out unto them, because of a secret love to some principle of practise of darkness in them: These shall meet with vengeance likewise. And is there not great justice and righteousness in this, seeing there is all the rea-
son

son in the world for man to distrust himself, and to trust Christ upon Gods Revelation of him in the Gospel?

Quest. But what is that rest which is to be dispensed to those who now meet with so much trouble? For that was the main thing which the Apostle here intended for the comfort of these Christians: *And to you who are troubled, rest with us.* This is comfort indeed: but to see others afflicted and tormented (though with those miseries which they have justly deserved, and drawn upon themselves) is in it self very smal matter of joy to a spirit made tender by the Gospel, and which far more heartily desires their salvation.

Ans. That I may express my self the more distinctly concerning this thing, I shall turn this one question into three, not to multiply considerations thereby, but to make those considerations, which otherwise were necessary to have come in, the more perspicuous and manifest. The questions are these. 1. *What the Rest is?* 2. *What it is which is to Rest?* 3. *How or in what respects it is to Rest?*

Qu. 1. *What is that Rest, which God hath now laid up for, and will one day give out to his troubled people?*

Ans. *Rest is the stilness or repose of nature.* It is nature coming to it self, and enjoyment of it self in its own proper place, this is Rest. It is the subsistency of a thing in its center, wherein all its motions are according to its own nature, and within its center: (for rest doth not forbid motion, but only the unnaturalness of motion, or some outward violence which laies an impediment before its nature.) Every thing is labouring, and that which it labours after is its Rest: Every thing is travelling, and that which it most naturally desires to travel towards, is its resting place.

Rest compriseth or comprehendeth two things. First the removal of all things which may any way disturbe, and

and secondly the supply of all which the nature can want, or desire to enjoy. Rest is a very large thing: While there is any thing left which may annoy, there cannot be full security: while there is so much as room for a desire after any thing, there is not perfect rest. Mature cannot be fully satisfied, and so lye down in perfect rest, without their fullness of perfection in its own kind. I lay down this on'y in general, and forbear particularizing, for thereby I should anticipate that which is to follow.

Q^a 2. *What is it on which he will bestow this rest, or what is it which shall rest?*

Ans^r. There are three things, or natures, unto which God appointed rest. First, *the new man*, this is the heir of his own nature, and this is to enjoy his own rest. Secondly, *the old man*, or *human spirit*, wherein this new man is sown, and wherewith it is clad. Thirdly, *the common creature*, or *animal spirit*, wherewith mans nature and Spirit is clad. All these have been in bondage, all these have been in travel, all these have undergone heavy labour, and all these shall find rest.

There are these three in one, and all these three in one are to reap and enjoy their own rest, and to partake with one anothers. For all these, as they have their proper nature and proper course; so have they also their proper rest: and yet, as they also participate in one anothers nature and course; so may they also in one anothers rest. For though they are in union, they are also distinct: and though they are distinct, yet they are also in union and conjunction. As they are distinct, so they have also their own peculiarity: and as they are in union, so they partake with one another. Christ, or the new nature partakes with God, the human nature with Christ, the animal nature with the human; and so again reciprocally. All these run the same lot here in this World: They work together, they suffer together, they are

are persecuted and afflicted one with another, and one in another, they tast and feel the same trouble (even one anothers trouble) and therefore according to righteousness are they to tast and enjoy the same rest (even one anothers rest.)

Qu. 3. *How, or in what respects shall these Natures rest ?*

Ans. In these two respects. First, there are some things they shall rest from, or have rest from. Secondly there are some things they shall rest in, or have rest in. *Rest, redemption or salvation* hath a double aspect, partly on that which is shut out from the redeemed Spirit, and partly on that which it is taken in into, both which being compleat, makes up compleat Rest, compleat Redemption, compleat Salvation.

1. *There are some things they shall have rest from, As,*
 1. *From their bondage and servitude*, from all their pains, miseries, and hardships in the *Land of Egypt*: They shall hear no more of their *task-masters*, nor of their *heavy burthens*. The poor seed, poor man, yea the poor creature is set about making bricks without straw, Its enemy is very cruel to it, in the land of its captivity, multiplying blowes and cruelties upon it freely; all which it shall be perfectly rescued and find rest from, in the great day of redemption and refreshment.

2. *From their hard travels in the wilderness*. If any soul be led out by God, from amidst this bondage, to seek after its true life and liberty, yet O how hard are these travels! how is it encumbered with its own Spirit, with ill companions, and with the interposition and assaults of enemies! Many a weary step doth the poor tired Spirit fetch, and many a time is it exceeding hungry and thirsty, yea and faint too from the sharp corrections of God, who spareth not his child, but handleth him very severely in this place of exercise. Now all these also it shall have rest from.

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3. *From*

3. *From their more generous labours in Egypt Canaan.* There is a kind of rest, which such as God freely takes to be his people in any dispensation here in this world, have a taste of. The Jews had their Canaan, and the Disciples of Christ their's: each had their Sabbath also, or time of rest. Ah! but these rests had their labours. These rests were Types of the rest, but not the rest it self. The very Disciples of Christ were to labour mightily in the midst of all their spiritual life and liberty: They were to work very hard in their day of grace: *Their making their calling and election sure, their watching, their fighting, &c.* were they not great labours? The whole course of this life was a warfare, a travel, a race, a very labourious thing.

2. *There are some things which they shall rest in,* and here in lieth the great sweetness of rest. It is but a privative, but an empty happiness (yet truly a very great happiness, considering the present state of things) to be rid of evil: but the sweetness of happiness, the sweetness of rest consisteth in being filled with good. Now the things wherein they are to rest are very many, or one. In a word, it is: *the nature of God, the wisdom of God, the love of God, the power of God, the fulness of God.* Their new Spirit, or new man, shall be swallowed up into the Spirit of God, and there it shall find all love, all wisdom, all strength, &c. its own, and shall rowl it self in compleat fulneis and satisfaction: Their human Spirit shall be swallowed up into their new Spirit, and their animal into their human. All these shall be perfectly filled in one another from the God-head. They shall need to build no more houses, nor plant no more vineyards, or seek out for food, clothing, or any other manner of necessary or recreation, either for their Spirits, or for their souls, or for their bodies: for they shall find all these ready fitted to their hand in the God head, where they shall

shall lye down in perfection of rest: yea all their motions then, being in God, cannot but be to them, as they are now to God, viz. perfect rest.

VER. 9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

This vengeance, which God will take on the wicked, is particularly thus described. It is *punishment*, it is that pain or misery which God imposeth on them, as the due reward of their evill heart and wayes. This punishment is *destruction*, that which God hath adjudged to sin as its proper wages, is death and destruction. The fruit of righteousness is *life and peace*, but the wages of sin is *death*. And as God brings forth and nurtures his seed to life and salvation; so the devil brings up his seed to be murdered; he tutors them to death: Death is the proper end, to which the Law of their nature and all their motions tend. And this destruction is *everlasting*, They shall be so destroyed as they shall live no more, *The smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever*. Yea, their destruction shall issue from the presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. That which saves others, shall undo them. The same fountain, the same presence of God, the same glory of his power which brings forth life and salvation to others, shall bring forth death and destruction to them. Their destruction is written in the face of God, and every time they look upon him they may read it, and every time he looks upon them he will let it forth. They would never endure the presence of God (for O how hatefull is every beaint of his light to the dark serpentine nature, and to what ever is tinctured by it!) They shall have their hearts desire, they shall not come into his presence, but their destruction shall go

forth from his presence, and they shall feel and see the glory of his power (which they could never yet beleeeve) brightening it self therein.

Now *destruction* may be said to be *everlasting* in divers respects. As, First, in respect of the thing which is thereby to be destroyed. Secondly, in respect of the person in whom the thing is which is to be destroyed. Thirdly, in respect of the being and nature of that person, I do not mean that nature which he hath now contracted, but that nature which God gave unto his being. And then the question would be how far this everlasting destruction (mentioned here and in other places of Scripture) extends and is to be understood, whether in some of these only, or in all these respects? Concerning which I shall speak my mind very freely, being assured in my soul that thereby I may do right to some, and injury to none.

1. Destruction may be said to be *everlasting*, in respect of the thing which is thereby to be destroyed. As the fire which destroyeth is everlasting; so it burneth up, that which it destroyeth, for ever: So that there is no return from this destruction. In this or that particular dispensation, iniquity may be slain and destroyed one way, and yet take root again, spring up, and break forth another way: But it is not so here; That which this fire destroyeth, it destroyeth everlastingly, it destroyeth for ever, so that it can never live again any more.

2. In respect of the person in whom the thing is which is to be destroyed, for he suffers everlasting destruction with it. He is the house which is pulled down and cast into the fire, because of the *leprosy* which hath overspread him so deeply that without his ruin it cannot be destroyed. So that this person is lost for ever, he shall never see life in the land of the living, but shall dye in and with the iniquity which hath seize d upon him, and hath broke forth

forth from him. Thus far I can acknowledge that everlasting destruction may proceed. Yea and in a sense I can yeeld the third also, namely, that God by his everlasting fire can burn consume and destroy the very nature and being of the creature, and bring it into its first principles, yea into its perfect nothingness: This I confess is not at all difficult to my apprehension: for he that made, can destroy: yea, and is it not far easier to destroy then to make?

But now, that God will destroy the very nature and being of his creature, that his skil cannot sever by his fire and gather back again to him the things which belong to him, that Satan shall for ever keep the ground which he hath gotten, by bringing his own nature and the nature of the creature into misery, that destruction must be everlasting in this sense also, so that these must be for ever, and for ever and ever (I mean not in a restrained sense, as the phrase is used in the Law, but in the utmost and largest sense) thrown away from him: this, I confess, I am not able to read either in the book of nature, or in the Scriptures, but am rather taught by both to beleve, that God can and will separate the precious from the vile universally, and make a large vessel for the finer to fill with the liquor of his own life and nature. There is a time to gather parcels, as well as to scatter them; and may there not be also a time to gather the whole lump, as well as to scatter it? Wherein it may be said of God, as it was said of Christ, *He hath done all things well*; He hath lost all, and yet he hath lost nothing. God hath discovered the vertue of his arm to some in special waies of salvation, but hath he thereby bound up his arm, so that it can go no further? God forbid. There is a righteousness and understanding in the nature of that love which desireth universal salvation, and yet, desireth not the avoiding of that destruction which

God hath threatned, and will most certainly bring upon sin and sinners. Who is like unto thee, O God, either in the salvations or destructions which thou extendest over this fabrick of clay!

There are two considerations, which well weighed, will mightily confirm this.

1. *The nature of the creature hath a foundation and dependence upon the nature of God.* It sprang not of or from it self, but from him it came, and toward him it bendeth in its being, and in all its motions. It is the image of him who created it, and hath borrowed its substance, and all that it is from him.

2. *The fall of the creature in any dispensation (or in never so many dispensations) cannot reach this foundation of nature.* It may indeed reach the present estate of the creature, making it miserable according to the Law or line of such or such a dispensation, as it did Adam, the Jews, the Christians, yea, and all the world: but it cannot rase out that relation which is between God and the creature, who cannot forget the works of his hands, (being the stamp and impression of his own Spirit, Life, Nature, and Being) because of any weakness in it, or because of any thing which could encroach upon it through its weakness. Nay to speak truth, it was necessary that the creature should be weak, and that it should fall and express its weakness; yea and all the effects which flow from hence, are necessary also, and necessarily are to have their course: And though God hath exceeding great cause of being angry with the creature in this respect (it having had an inclination and strength from him to the contrary) yet hath he also great cause of pleasure, delight and satisfaction therein.

God did make the creature, and set it in its estate, God did approve and love the creature in the estate wherein he set it, God was able to have preserved the creature there

there from falling; yea, God could not have suffered the creature to have fallen; but in wisdom, righteousness and love; even such an everlast wisdom, righteousness and love, as his nature is full of. Had God been in the weak estate of the creature, and the creature in his estate of perfection, would he have been content that the creature should have suffered him to fall, after the manner that he is conceived to have suffered it to fall? If one man permits another to ruin himself, whom he could save from ruin, is he not guilty? And though the Law of mans nature doth not directly reach the Nature of God, yet is there not somewhat, of far more transcendent righteousness, in the Nature of God to comprehend and answer it? If this be righteousness in the nature of man, and from the Nature of God, then certainly there is a stronger and fuller root of the same righteousness in him, which will bring forth this fruit more abundantly than the nature of man possibly could, had it its utmost scope herein. Surely, most surely God could never have suffered the creature to fall, but in such wisdom, love, truth, and righteousness, wherein both his own nature is fully remembered, and the nature of the creature not forgotten.

And the punishments to be inflicted upon fallen man, they are not according to the measure of mans vain mind, but according to the righteous Law of each dispensation under which man falls. Every transgression hath its due recompence or reward, whereof it may have a taste here, but the full proportion hereafter: But that it is the just reward of every transgression under every dispensation, for the Being and Nature of the creature to lye for ever, or eternally, suffering in Hell fire, the Scripture hath not taught, but mans own imaginary mind hath forged it from the Scriptures. *Adams sin* calls for death, *The transgression of the Law* calls for death, *The transgression*

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sion of the Gospel calls for death; and God will be righteous in observing all the Laws he hath set up in every dispensation: But there is no nature, which ever came from God; but hath still ground of hope in God, even in the deepest Hell (though the darkness of Hell is such, that it is able to with-hold this perfectly from the weak eye of the creature.) Man hath no cause to bless himself in any of his evil waies, for the fruit thereof is very bitter: and yet he hath no cause neither to fall foul upon God, who will deal with him only in truth and righteousness, and will not at all forget him, even in his administration of his greatest severity and sharpness towards him. Let God be true in his Nature and in his Word, and let every man be found a liar in his vain conceptions and imaginations concerning the Nature of God, and concerning his mind revealed in his word, which the light of God alwaies measureth aright, but the darkness or light of man can in no wise comprehend.

VER. 10. *When he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that beleeve (because our testimony among you was beleeved) in that day.*

The people of God here have a double description, or note of distinction. They are *Saints*, and *Believers*. They are such as are holy, such whom God purifieth from the pollutions of the World, and of their own Spirits; and they are such as beleeve in him, such as by the life which he letteth down upon them, depart out of themselves into him. Man lives in himself, man staves and abides in himself, the greatest thing that he desires is the rectification and perfection of his own nature: but he that is taught of God learns by him to go out of himself, to seek an abiding in God, and in the nature and spirit of his righteousness.

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Now to these Saints, or beleevers, the inheritance of the God-head is made due by God. The Kingdom, the glory, the life, the happiness belongs to them. To them belongs Gods own *Holy Land*, even the *Canaan* of God. But yet they are not to have this in possession (no not one foots bredth thereof, as *Abraham* himself had not) but only in such hopes and promises as the nature of man laughs at. Well let *man*, let *Ishmael* (the first fruits and excellency of nature) laugh at poor despicable *Isaac* and the inheritance which belongs to him by promise, yet this cannot at all interpose between him and that blessedness, which God hath appointed a proper time for the bringing forth of.

There is a time when God will set up his glory in his Saints, when he will so appear in them, and do such things for them, as shall make themselves and all the world admire them. God is now hid in them, he is not known in them, there is no notice taken of it that God is now in union with them, and by that union maintains their life. God doth now rather eclipse then discover himself there: but he will one day break forth, and make forth himself from thence. There will he set up his glory, and from thence shall his glory shine. There shall all the world and they themselves admire at the wonderfull appearance of God in them.

Now this is the time, *in that day*, when God shall come to set up that glory, which he hath hitherto been preparing, in his Saints, and make himself admired in all beleevers, then shall the time of their rest be, and the time of mans trouble and everlasting punishment.

And the ground of the ones happiness is his faith, and the ground of the others punishment and misery is his *unbelief*. The one hath been taught and hath learned to decline himself, and to trust God: the other cannot depart from himself, nor can his nature learn to enter into the Nature of God.

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That whereby this faith or unbelief is discovered, is by the receiving or rejecting the light and obedience of the Gospel, *because our testimony among you was heeved.* He who is born of God, who is a sheep of his forming, he knoweth his voice, he heareth his testimony in those who are sent forth from him: He who is a stranger to him knoweth ~~not~~ his voice, nor can ~~not~~ receive his testimony, but his whole understanding reason and nature fight against it.

The main thing which God holds out is life by his Son, salvation by his Son, redemption by the blood of his Son. All that is to be had for this, is the testimony of men outwardly, and the testimony demonstration and conviction of his spirit inwardly. The sum of the matter is this: That man is corrupt, and miserable by his corruption; a breaker of the Law of his own nature and of his God; and liable to death thereby: that God hath sent his Son, subjecting him under the Law, to redeem man from it, and from the death which ensueth thereupon: that Christ died for this end, and for this end rose again and ascended, &c. that he who will be saved by Christ, must receive him into his inner man, become universally subject to him, being wholly guided by his spirit, and must fulfil his doctrine, bearing his testimony and cross in the midst of all opposition either from himself, or from the spirit of Satan, or from the spirit of the world. He who is taught, who is thus brought off by God into the doctrine and sufferings of Christ, from the testimony which the Apostles formerly preached, and have still left upon record, shall see what the issue of it will be *in that day.*

VER. 11. Wherefore alſo we pray alwayes for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and full of all the good pleaſure of his goodneſſe, and the work of faith with power.

This great work, as it is begun by prayer, ſo it is to be carried on by prayer. Chriſt at firſt prayes for the child the child, and he ever after intercedes for him. The child ſo ſoon as he begins to live prayes, and he receives food, clothing, wiſdom, ſtrength and aſſiſtance, by prayer. As ſoon as he lives, he prayes. (his nature, his life teacheth him to pray) and as he prayes, ſo he thrives. He that ſeeketh, findeth; he that aſketh, receiveth. I will pour out (ſaith God) the Spirit of Grace and of Supplication. And when their mouths are opened, very ſoon they ſhall be abundantly filled: ſo that they ſhall be able to ſpeak the nature of the child to ask, ſhall his own nature already be formed to hear.

The nature of the child dependeth upon the nature of the father, and it is as natural to the child to ask, as to the father to give. There is a natural application of the nature of the child to the nature of the father, and the nature of the father as naturally beareth and anſwereth to it. This ſhould be good atwaies on either hand, ſeven in the darkeſt and moſt deſtroyed condition of that child, but it doth not then appear, ſo that that eye which knoweth it only by its appearance, cannot then diſcern it. But there is alſo a time when the child is brought forth into the light, and knows himſelf, feeling his own nature, with the deſires thereof (as it was in thoſe daies here mentioned) and then there is a ſenſible and viſible putting forth of this nature, both for it ſelf, and for its fellow ſervants and diſciples in the ſame diſpenſation of grace. Yea, there thoſe that are ſtrongest in life, and through

whom the great light of the dispensation flows, are most to abound in prayer; not only for themselves, but also for those unto whom the light, grace and power of the dispensation hath passed through their means. Now here are three great things prayed for.

1. *That our God would count you worthy of this calling.*

Many are called, but few are chosen: Many were brought by the power of the Lord out of Egypt, whom the Lord did not count worthy of the Land of Canaan. Many fell in that dispensation of the Law; and many fell also in that dispensation of the Gospel, whom the Lord did not count worthy of that grace and light which he pleased to let down upon them in the Gospel. Many did run the Gospel race, but few did obtain the Gospel prize. They were healed too soon, they were quickened too soon, before the heart of the old man was broken, and so he came to live again with him, and by the abundance of his evil spaw and seed choked the good seed. And these the Lord doth not count worthy: *He that puts his hand to the plough and looks back, is not worthy: He that is again overcome of the lusts and corruption of the world, is not worthy: He that doth not truly prize the true nature of life, is not worthy the crown of life.* O happy is he whom God shall count worthy of this calling, and not at last turn him by for the emptiness and unprofitableness of his Spirit. To be called out of the world and the present vanity thereof, together with the death and misery which in the end ensueth thereupon, is it not a precious calling? Remember how after all Gods trials of the Jews, they were laid aside as vessels of no use: and if Disciples have lost their salt, they also must needs become unfavoury.

2. *And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness,*

Great is the goodness of God to those to whom he hath dispensed life in the Gospel, or to whom he pleaseth

to dispence life, for his rule herein is his pleasure. He chose the *Jews*, because it pleased him; and he picked out Disciples to Christ, according to the same pleasure. This *pleasure* is good, full of goodness, it carries abundant goodness with it: good outward things, good inward things, *grace, light, life, peace, joy* in the Holy Spirit, inward treasure in the heart, and spiritual gifts in abundance to the persons. So that Christians wanted nothing of the Spirit for their own particular estate, nor nothing for their visible life and communion, but they had enough to make them shine in the world, and among one another. But yet there was many times a stop in this goodness, there were those whom God did not count worthy of this calling, from whom he did withdraw the natural influences of this breath, and suffer them to return to their old vanity, or to be swelled up with new inflammations. Yet there were others on whom he let the current of this goodness, according to the Fountain thereof, *viz.* his *good pleasure*, run forth, until he had emptied all the life and sweetness of this dispensation upon them. Now for these *Thessalonians*, the Apostle here prays that they might be such, that the Lord might go on in his goodness toward them, till he had fulfilled it all.

3. *And the work of Faith with power.*

There is a work of faith, there is a work which faith hath to do upon the heart and life, or rather which God hath to do by faith. *Faith purifies the heart*, *Faith renews the life*. Faith is a seed of light and life in the spirit of a man, which leavens him and brings him forth a new. Now the work of faith is more and more to cleanse; to purge still the old leaven out, and make the lump newer: to bring more and more out of the world, and out of the flesh, into union and communion with God in the Life and Nature of his Spirit. And this work requireth mighty power: God began it with great power, and it

cannot go on without great power. Now this the Apostle desireth also for them, that God would carry on this work powerfully in them.

VER. 12. *That the Name of our Lord Iesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Iesus Christ.*

The ends for which the Apostle beggeth this, is partly for the honour of Christ; whom God hath intended to advance in this dispensation of the Gospel: and partly for their honour, for Christians are to be advanced with Christ in the Gospel. They are to be glorified in Christ, and Christ in them. And the advancement both of the Name of Christ in them, and of their Name in Christ, is to be according to the letting forth upon them, and springing up in them, of the grace of God and of Christ.

And this is the meaning of the words, *that the Name of our Lord Iesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Iesus Christ.* The Name of Christ is to be glorified in them, and they in him, according to the grace of God and of Christ. The Name of Christ is to be glorified in them, and they in him, according to the grace of God and of Christ. The Name of Christ is to be glorified in them, and they in him, according to the grace of God and of Christ.

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DANGER OF EXALTATION
Of a Mans Spirit over others.

MATH. 5. 22.

Whoſoever ſhall ſay (to his Brother) Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of Hell fire.



Very man is our neighbour and our brother. The whole race of mankind are brethren in the line of nature. They have all one Father, they ſprang all from the ſame root, they are all of the ſame blood and ſpirit. Thoſe who are begotten again by a new diſpenſation of light and life, theſe are made brethren anew, by virtue of that diſpenſation wherein they are begotten, born, and brought forth. Thus the people of the *Jews* were brethren among themſelves, and thus alſo the *Disciples* of *Chriſt* were brethren among themſelves.

Now among neighbours and brethren, *love, ſweetneſs* and *kindneſs* is proper, not *contempt* or *reproach*. If there be weakneſſes (as ſurely there are in every perſon, in every condition) they ſhould be covered by neighbourly and brotherly love, in meekneſs, and with tenderneſs; and not made uſe of as occaſions of upbraiding and deriſion. In things wherein thou art weak (for all the children of men, and all the Sons of God, in all diſpenſations,

dispensations, are foolish) wouldst thou be looked upon and reviled as a fool? And canst thou in righteousness measure that to thy brother, which thou wouldst not receive from him?

And yet every man, yea and all the Sons of God too, are apt to call their brethren fools: yea those who may seem most free from it in the outwardness of the letter, are many times most apt to do it in the inwardness of the spirit. Man doth naturally exalt himself, and look upon himself as wise, despising all others, who walk not in the line of his light, as fools. Thus the *Heathen* accounted first the *Jews*, and after them the *Christians*, fools: and the *Jews* accounted both the *Heathen* and *Christians*, fools: and the *Christians* were apt to look upon both the *Heathen* and *Jews* as fools. The Apostle (Rom. 11.) intinuereth so much, in his advice to the *Christians* not to boast over the *Jews*. Yea persons that walk together in the same line of light, yet concerning such among them as fall short therein, those who are more able (or at least take themselves so to be) are prone to look upon them as fools. Thus the *Heathen* call one another fools, and so do the *Jews*, and the *Christians* likewise.

But there is very great danger herein: for all these hereby shew the unbrokenness of their spirits. They discover a lifting up, which God will throw them down and humble them for. This fruit in or from the Spirit, discovers somewhat in the nature of that Spirit, which is for the fire. He that is laid low enough, cannot rise so high in wisdom as to call his brother fool: and he that is not already laid low enough, is yet to be laid low. The fire of Hell was prepared for such a kind of spirit as this, that exalteth himself in the apprehension of his wisdom, calling his brother fool: and surely such a kind of spirit is in great danger of it. The Lord will lay all flat before him: and whatsoever riseth up, under any dispensation

of his, as if it were something, the Lord will lay beneath at the rest. It is a very sore passage which Christ hath, *The first shall be last, and the last first*, Hee that saith (though not outwardly, but only in the nature of his spirit) *Stand off, for I am holier then thou*; The Lord, when he cometh to judg, will make him see, that hee himself is more unclean then that which he judgeth so unclean. He that is cleansed by the Lord, by the evidence of that light, cannot but cry out concerning himself, *Unclean, unclean*, but hath not a word against any other. If he see any evil or folly in others, he doth not look upon them, or revile them as fools, but breatheth toward the Lord for healing for them, as well as for himself. But he that hath a stone to throw at another, or can in his heart despise another (which God himself doth not, Job. 35. 6.) hath not yet been stoned to death, hath not yet had the fountain of his own folly and reproach opened in him, and given up to the flames. For he that once understandeth what a fool he himself is, can never afterward tell how to call another fool. These things therefore remain for him, and he is yet in danger of the wrath, and fire, and death of Hell.

There are two things wherein chiefly the safety of persons consists. The one is, *in having and faithfully observing a true line of light*. To be guided by God either according to the light which he hath set up in nature, or by the light of any dispensation, either of Law or Gospel, and faithfully to follow him therein. To walk humbly with God, thus teaching and nurturing the soul by any of his instructions and disciplines. The other is, *in remaining broken in this broken estate*, wherein all things are as yet involved and concluded: for though there may be some relief under, yet there is not vertue enough as yet come forth to heal and make up the breach.

These the Lord will spare. Him that walks with him

in truth and righteousness, how can he condemn? But here all men in all dispensations hitherto are fallen, and must still fall. Therefore the only way of safety is to remain broken. They are the high and lofty things which God assaults, he disdains to break the broken, or to afflict the afflicted. What glory can it be to him to strip the naked? To trample upon that which is already down? Indeed if there be any thing in them which calls for the fire, they must have it: (for God must be just to his own fire, and throw in all the fuel which appertains to it.) Yet this will be their great advantage, that however God see good to deal with them, he cannot deal roughly and hardly, as he does with the unbroken spirit of man, but with the greatest sweetness and tenderness, inasmuch as they perhaps may take pleasure in those flames, which so fiercely scorch and devour the haughty spirits.

But if in the midst of this brokenness of spirit (as man may esteem it, and may form himself into it) any lift up himself, and call others fools, who are not so broken, looking upon himself as safe hereby, he plainly therein discovereth his spirit not to be yet truly broken, and is in more danger of Hell fire, yea and of hotter flames, than those whom he despiseth and thus judgeth. For this his brokenness is but a wall which he hath dawbed with untempered mortar, and cannot prove a fence unto him,

T H E
C O N C L U S I O N,

Containing a brief relation concerning my self, with a Faithfull Beam of Light, which may bee of service to such, as are not yet Translated out of the dark Spirit of this World into the True Light of Life.

Because I have formerly given hints concerning the unusual exercises and breakings which have befallen me, which may kindle an honest desire of further enquiry thereinto, the satisfaction whereof may be usefull to many in their present course, (especially in this age, wherein God is judging, shaking, and disturbing both flesh and spirit) I shall therefore at this present give some further account thereof.

I have both been very serious, and have also been followed with sorrows from my tender yeers. From my very child-hood have I been affected with the sad and lamentable condition of mankind, bewailing the present vain dark course thereof, and the future misery which necessarily ensueth thereupon, for my own part, applying my self to such waies of Devotion and Religion, as might best conduce to relieve me therein. I began with the Religion which I round exposed to my view, faith-

fully observing (though not altogether without regret) the outward and shadowy part thereof , but pressing most earnestly toward the kernel and substance thereof. *Truth in the inner man , a true spirit there , a true nature there , true life there ;* This was the thing which my eye and heart was swallowed up with ; yet not so but that I was as zealous and strict in all outward observations , so far as my light led me , as if my eternal salvation had wholly depended thereupon. It would be too tedious to relate my several steps , and the various occurrences which befel me , what nipping storms and frosts , and what refreshing Dews and Sun-shines I had to purify me , and to cause me to grow in that Spirit. But when I was almost at the top , filling my heart and soul to the very brim with *knowledge , faith , love , obedience , humility , and the fatness and riches of the dispensations of Gods grace ;* even then was I shaken , smitten , and thrown down into the depth of so great misery , darkness , and anguish , as my soul yet trembles at the remembrance of. The thing which I could not fear , overtook me : He , whom I looked upon as my indissoluble friend , became my greatest enemy , bringing that upon me , which I thought it utterly impossible for him to suffer to befall me , much more for him to lay it upon me with his own hand. *These breakings were very sudden ,* they came upon me *in one hour : very violent ,* they rushed in by main force against all the oppositions of my heart and soul : *very unexpected ,* for indeed I then looked for somewhat of another nature , and not for that : *very piercing ,* for they entered deep , seizing upon the very life of my spirit. (If it had been my *corruption* that had been smitten , then I might have born it : but it was the *purity , the integrity , the ingenuity* of my Spirit. It was not the excellency of mine old nature , but my new life in the dispensation of the Gospel , which was rent from me : and this was death indeed.)

They

They were also *universal*; for there was nothing spared, No knowledge that was not overclouded, no Holy inclination that was not born down, and made visibly faint and darkness to me (for in this fire and great darkness there was a kind of light.) And *these breakings* were not only in the lump, but particularly (for though I received the great blow at once, *in one day, in one hour, in one moment*: yet it was perfected gradually afterward.) The inmost, and most practical *light* and *knowledg*, which God had bestowed on me, was broken piece by piece. My souls *dependance* upon him *by grace*, and *every grace* which he had kindled in me (as *faith, love, humility, meekness, patience, &c.*) was raised to a greater height than ordinary, and caused to act more purely, and then broken in pieces: so that I as really, and sensibly, felt my self lost and undone, as ever man did in his outward estate; against which, all reasonings and considerations were of no value: for alas what are they to a demonstration of sense! I confess, I would fain have beleaved otherwise, and have apprehended this to have been some great temptation, but all such apprehensions were but like fancies and shadows, which pass away and cannot stand before reality and substance. When I could not possibly deny the thing, then would I fain have understood it, but it was too hard for me. Fain would I have pleaded with my God: for though I knew he would have cast me, yet I should not have fallen according to the imaginations of the unrighteous spirit of man, but according to the love, truth and righteousness of his nature, which overthrow my soul longed to receive from his hand. I say, *with my God*: For though he had forsaken me, and was rent from mee in that dispensation, wherein he had formerly walked sweetly with me, and though I also was forced from my hold, yet there was still somewhat in my nature which clave to his nature, as

I now partly discern, though then I knew it not at all. Fain would I in this condition, have leaned upon his nature, but how could I do any such thing sensibly, it being altogether hid from me? Yet this I will freely confess that at the beginning of this misery, I had now and then a little sensible food and relief (though never that which I sought, nor at the time wherein I sought, nor in the way which I sought) and afterward I had insensible food and relief, which I perceived not at all at present (but was as one perfectly undone and overwhelmed with oppression, misery and distress) but I have had some little glimmerings of it since. These things may seem strange contradictions, and cannot be understood by any, but only by such as know what that death is, and what that life is which God administreth, and carrieth on in a way wholly hidden from the eye of all flesh. But it becometh me to be silent at present, because I still lye in darkness, and have not yet a song of praise and thanksgiving put into my mouth: Therefore though I must needs say a little more, yet it will bee but very little.

What the meaning of all this was, I shall not now presume to declare; nor what the Lord hath been doing, or hath done; yet this I can very freely utter in the ears of all flesh, *My soul doth bless him for breaking me in peeces, My soul doth acknowleg his righteousness and goodnes therein, though very weakly and in the dark. I know that what he hath slain shall live no more, nor do I now desire its life any more.* It was given me to sacrifice; and because I understood not, nor had not learned how to sacrifice it, he himself took it forcibly from me, sacrificing it himself. My soul boweth down before him, blessing his name: *Good is the hand of the Lord! most holy, righteous, sweet, and kind is his severity and wrath!* But my heare and tongue are not yet prepared to speak these things, I will therefore

therefore cease, lest he judg me yet again for taking his name in vain. I am now a dark thing; still in the dark, being neither what I formerly was, nor yet formed into a vessel by the Potter: Not yet perfectly broken (though to my own sence perfectly broken long ago) and very little made up. That small fruit which doth come forth from me, springs of its own accord, and is not at the command of any fleshly desire or understanding, either of my own or any others. I have now done concerning myself, and am also drawing to a close of what at present I have to say to others.

I have no delight to disturb any man in his way, though I confess it cannot but grieve me, to see men drink such full draughts of wind and vanity, in stead of the truth of the spirit (yet I am not altogether void of instruction and satisfaction on that behalf) which cannot nourish any true life in them, but only swell and gripe their bowels. But as it hath been from the beginning, even so it is and will be to the end, viz. By every heave which God affordeth man to lift him out of his filth and misery, is he the more entangled therein. *Thy wisdom and thy knowledg, O vain man, hath perverted thee, and made thee a loser by every dispensation, which the Lord hath let down upon thee for thy good.* Thou hast found out *untempered mortar*, and dawbed up a wall to shelter thee from the wrath of God: but thy wall will not be able to stand before the overflowing flood; whose strength will bear it down upon thee, and cover thee with the ruins thereof. *O that man had an ear to hear! O that Israel had an eye to see! O that Disciples had an heart to consider!* For they are all fallen under the condemnation of those several lights which God hath set up in them, and have engaged God not only against themselves, but against the very foundations of their buildings: yea they have corrupted not only their *wares and works*, but also their very *lights*: so that though God will

will justify all those lights as they came from himself, yet none of them as they are now formed and made use of by man. *Mans light of nature, the Jews light of the Law, Christians light of the Gospel,* They are their own and not Gods; and so cannot lead them to the end God hath proposed, or man desireth, but must perish and fall with themselves.

Quest. But what were best for man to do in this his present estate? Shall he give up himself to darknesse? (for to what end should he walk on in that light which is but darknesse?) Shall he throw off all ordinances and duties, and become an Heathen? Nay, shall he throw off that light also, (for is not that also confounded and uncertain?) and become a Brute? Nay, if he will be truly ingenuous, perhaps he may be forced to confesse that he is not able to maintain a life so high: Whither then shall he descend? Or what will become of him, if he give way to considerations of this nature?

Answ. I shall not directly answer this question, but proceed to the other part of the Conclusion (which may perhaps comprehend an answer to it.) I call it a Faithful Beam of Light, yet not in way of boasting, nor as intending to contend for the making of it appear so, but only from the testimony of my conscience in the truth. It is thus:

There are three things, wherein the sweet temper and safety of the creature doth consist. One is, *To walk faithfully in that station wherein God hath placed it:* Another is, *To be content to be broken by him, as much, and as often as he pleaseth:* And the third is, *To wait quietly for the descent of that life and power from him, which can easily translate it out of its own misery into his blessedness.* There have many changes and various dispensations befallen man, since the transgression of Adam from the Law of his life: but in what dispensation or state soever he be,
this,

this, rightly applied to him therein, will prove his best and safest temper and course.

1. *The creature is to walk fairly in its own station.* Whether it be placed under the light and influences of *Nature*, or under the light and influences of the *Law*, or under the light and influences of the *Gospel*: Under which soever of these it is placed, it is to improve what it hath, and to seek for more. (For all these waies, it pleaseth God in his wisdom to exercise, and make trials on the broken nature of the creature.) And in all these, *the diligent hand maketh rich*: The blessing of God is in every one of these, upon the endeavours of the creature: and the sluggard is blasted and brought to a morsel of bread. God is not so hard a Master, as the evil and slothful servant apprehends him to be, taking up what he did not lay down, and reaping what he did not sow, (-Luc. 19. 21.) but he expecteth only from man according to what he hath bestowed upon him. Nay he doth not exact from man (in his following dispensations) according to what he bestowed upon him at first; but only according to what remaineth in him; together with that which he yet leaveth forth upon him. He doth not exact from man what he justly might have expected from Adam, but what the light yet remaining in him teacheth him: Nay he doth not expect from the *Heathen* what he expecteth from the *Jews*, nor from the *Jews* what he expecteth from *Christians*, but according as he hath sown of his light and of his life, so doth he expect to reap.

Fear God and keep his Commandments. This is the whole duty of man. This he expecteth from Adam, and this he expecteth from all men still; even from every sort, according to their instructions therein. From common man, according to the instructions of the light of nature: from the *Jews*, according to their instructions from the light of the Law: from *Christians*, according to their instru-

tions from the light of the Gospel: for all these teach the same thing, though in different degrees, and with different demonstrations.

Man then is to consider what estate and condition he is placed in by God, and to walk accordingly. No man can make himself any thing (for God is the great Potter, which formeth every vessel of clay:) but every man is to take thankfully his own fabrick, and not to aspire beyond his own region. The *Heathen* man cannot make himself a *Jew*, nor can the *Jew* make himself a *Christian*: And it is far better to be a *Heathen* or a *Jew* of Gods making, than a *Christian* of ones own making. Do ye not remember since God thrust aside the *Jews*, and chose the *Nethens*? Yea the greatest sinners among the *Heathens*, before the most devout and religious *Jews*? And who know how near the time is, wherein God will thrust aside the *Christians*, and choose both the *Heathen* and the *Jew* before them? God will once more thrust away the wisdom of the wise, and confound the understanding of the prudent. For as the *Jews*, by the light of the Law, could not discern the *Messiah* in the flesh: No more are *Christians* able, by the light of the Gospel, to discern the same *Messiah* in the nature of his Spirit, and so they also must necessarily stumble at his appearance. It is true, *Christians* did discern somewhat in that first age: but since, there hath been a vail cast over that which was then revealed, yea and the eye and heart of *Christians* hath also been veiled, and they are not yet unvail'd, as they themselves manifest who say they see. Who hath arrived at the true temperature of the first age? And yet God is able to find fault with the very constitution thereof, as not being pure Gospel, but partaking more of the nature of the Law; then will stand with the love of his Spirit, inasmuch as he cannot suffer this, neither to abide for ever, but is engaged by the Law of his nature, after

after it hath fully acted its part, to cause it to pass away. Wherefore he hath promised, saying: For once more I shake not the Earth only, but also Heaven. This people, this policy, must also have the line of confusion and emptiness drawn over them, and pass away. Yet let no man cast himself into an estate of desolation, for that ariseth from the same wisdom of the flesh which useth to exalt it self: but let every man pray for light to discover his own place, and there let him stand, walking according to that line of light which God hath left him, and not according to anothers. If he indeed hath the light of Christianity, let him walk according to the light of Christianity: If he hath the light of the Law, let him walk according to the light of the Law: If he hath only the dim light of nature, yet let him be true to that, and hee shall find God will not be hard to him; for though this cannot redeem him from his fallen estate, yet it will be his justification in his present estate, see *Rom. 2.* ver. 12, 13, 14, 15. If the *Christian* with all the allowances of the Gospel, if the *Jew* with all the allowances of the Law, if the *Heathen* with the allowances belonging to the light of nature, can be found weighty in their own scale, they must needs have praise and honour of the righteous God.

But this is the misery of this present world, every man magnifieth himself, his own way, his own light, despising his neighbour and brother, and yet doth in no wise answer the true nature of that light which he himself acknowledgeth. The *Heathen* is very insolent, upon the apprehension of his own natural and acquired wisdom, scoffing at both the *Jew* and the *Christian*, and yet hee is a sinner against the Law of Nature, yea against that very Light of Nature, which is set up in his own conscience. The *Jew* is as outrageous as the *Heathen*, despising the *Heathen* and the *Christian*, both which with

him are *Dogs*, and yet he is a transgressor of the Law of *Moses*. The *Christian* rises up on higher terms than either, speaking great words of the Gospel, and of Christ his Saviour; and alas what is he but a shame and reproach unto him, not knowing at all the nature and life of that Spirit which, he saith, hath renewed him; but remaining still poisoned with the leaven and venome of the flesh, which breaketh forth manifestly in the eye of others, though never so much hid from his own! So that considering this state of things, how just is that complaint of God by the Spirit of the Psalmist, which his Spirit in the Apostle also sets seal to? *Rom. 3. ver. 10. &c. There is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one.* This is the first thing proper to man in what estate soever he be, namely, to walk fairly therein, according to the true and genuine nature and measure of that light, which is therein by God let out upon him.

2. Though he must walk as strictly, as exactly, as carefully as possibly he can; yet he must withal be content to be broken by God; as much and as often as he pleaseth. God hath not yet brought forth the enduring nature, or the enduring estate and condition, but only that which is a perishing shadow of it; whose end by destruction, is written in its own very nature and state. *Adam* might seem to have been an excellent piece, a piece fit to honour the Creator for ever: but he that made him was able to find fault with him, as well as with his Angels; and so he dashed him in pieces like a potters vessel; and what is now become of all the wisdom, beauty, excellency, and glory of *Adam*? The *Jews* were picked out of the broken stock of the world, to be a peculiar people to God: He chose them by his love; he sanctified them to

be his people, he entered into Covenant with them to be their God, and he gave them Laws, and did take upon him to teach and guide them: but he still ever anon expressed his dislike of them, by *Moses* and all his *Prophets*, and at last fell quite out both with that people, and with that Covenant whereby they became his people. The *Christians* were yet a more select people, whom God did gather by his own Spirit, and upon whom he did powre out the abundance of his Spirit: These issued out of a more full rich love, were drawn much nigher to God, had a more inward and spiritual sanctification than that people of the *Jews*, might seem even to touch the bowels of the *everlasting Covenant*, and to be seated in that *immortality and life* which was brought to light by the Gospel, and yet Gods promise is to shake these also: This people, this policy, this dispensation of the Spirit, &c. was all to be shaken, to make way for somewhat else. The abiding thing (which was darkly pointed at under the Law, but more clearly revealed by the Gospel) God will establish: but the dispensations both of the Law and Gospel, which were but veils or dark representations of the bright nature of truth, are to be done away. And God did begin to shake immediately upon the first times, plainly shewing that this doctrine and policy was never able to keep him and his people together, no more then the former, and that therefore he must necessarily to work yet once again, to beget bring forth and maintain that *Covenant* and that *Seed*, which is to live with him for ever.

Now what shall poor man do, when the mighty God shakes the foundations under him? How shall the poor grass, or flower of the field stand and preserve its life and beauty, before the blasting power of this mighty wind? Shall it build up as fast as God throws down? Or shall it rear up an appearance in the place of the truth? This indeed is the counsel and practise of mans vain heart.

heart; but it were far better for him to receive the wound, and to fall down flat and lye buried in his own ruins, till God please to visit and heal him. God will once more throw all the world flat on their faces (all the *Heathen*, all *Jews*, all *Christians*) that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before him: O happy is he who is taught to receive the fall! happy is he who can in truth of Spirit say thus,

If he throw me, as he did Adam, out of the sweet light and life of that Paradise; wherein he himself planted me, there will I lye flat before his presence; or a deep mourner behind his back, if he should proceed to cast me quite out of his sight. If he will raise me up again to live as a far lower rate, like a Jew under the dispensation and whippings of the law, I will be content to rise and walk humbly with him there: and if my sins and the weakness of my flesh overtake and undo me here also, I will be content to fall here again. Yea if he will raise me yet once more, quickening me by the light and power of that dispensation of the Gospel, I will willingly enter into this also, even though I were sure thereby to receive the dreadfullest fall of all. I am the clay in the hands of the Potter, let him make me or mar me, as he pleaseth. He understandeth both himself and me, I understand neither what I am nor what I desire. I know not the light whereby he proceeds about me, and how can I judg of any of his motions concerning me? Only let him lead me in the truth, in how low a track soever! And yet if there be persons that are to be misled and undone by vanity, what am I, that I should refuse that lot, and turn it off to another? If he will chuse sin and misery for me, I will be a sinner and miserable, though I am able to bear the weight of neither. Let him do what he will with me, or with any others whatsoever, I will lay my hand upon my mouth and not speak a word, nay upon my heart and not think a thought. When he bringeth forth his motions and his light, then will I speak freely, if I have ought against either: but at present
while

while I am thus in the dark, I will be perfectly silent, and like a Lamb dumb before the shearer.

This is that temper of Spirit, which should be in every man in some proportion; answerable to that condition estate and degree wherein God hath placed him; but alas, how far is it from any sort of men! Man is very willing to be exalted by God; but he is by no means willing to be brought down again, which plainly discovereth, that in his exaltation he hath contracted a selfish interest and desire of happiness, in a way suitable to his own present dark light, and not according to the mind nature and will of God: For if he were involved in the nature and will of God, he would as readily come down at the beck of that will, as ever he went up: but, in all his ascents, he nourisheth and seeketh the life of that Spirit which God at first brake, and so still becometh a fresh enemy to him under a new appearance of friendship. Man knoweth not, in any condition, that he was made for God, but still so manageth it as if he were made for himself, which must necessarily prove his ruin again and again, in every dispensation whereinto he is led, until this Spirit of his be truly, really, substantially, and perfectly broken in him, and he formed of that Spirit which is of God: and then he will be altogether for God (*viz.* for the full current of his nature and will) and not at all for himself, in any way of distinction from God: And then, what God is and does will be far more to him, (not in notion or word, but in the truth of his heart and Spirit) then what he himself can possibly desire either to be or enjoy. But the root of this was not in Adams nature, wherefore it was impossible for him to be thus, much more for any after him to be so, who are formed not of his pure, but of his depraved Spirit.

3. (And lastly) *He is to wait quietly for the descent of life and power from above.* There is in God a fulness of blessedness

blessedness and perfection, which he will not alwaies keep locked up in his own bosome, but will find a time to let down upon his seed; and upon his creatures, that they also may tast of, and fill themselves with the sweetness and fatness of his life and Spirit. There is a time for the redemption of *Israel*, for the turning of the captivity of *Jacob*, for the bringing home of all the seed and family of God into the house of God: *I go* (saith Christ) *to prepare a place for you: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto my self, that where I am, there ye may be also.* Yea the creature also is to partake of the redemption of the seed, *Rejoyce ye Nations with his People.* The Natural Spirit of man, as well at the renewed Spirit of the seed, is to be refreshed: and therefore the Spirit of man, and the Spirit of the creature (having a share in it) is to grone and mourn for the day of redemption, and to bear patiently all their present burthens and miseries, in hope of relief in that day. And O how happy is he, who shall have any line of light and favour let out upon him in that day, and not be thrust (with the Spirits of error and hypocrisy) into utter darkness!

This now is *True Religion*, This is the path of a true Spirit; wherein hee that walks faithfully, shall have praise of God: But that which most men advance themselves by in their own thoughts, is vanity; and can never profit them in truth, because it is vanity. It is not outward notions and practises of any kind, which commend a man to God, but an inward nature. The *Jews* were more abhorred by God under all their sacrifices and observations of the Law, then the *Heathen* walking righteously without them, *Rom. 2. 13. 14.* Nor is it now the hearing of remission of sins by Christ, and a mans casting himself upon him by faith according to the flesh, and walking in Gospel-fellowship, and applying him-
self

self to Gospel-obedience according to the flesh, which can commend a man to God: for the old heart may be kept alive and nourished under all these: but it is alone the power of truth, changing the heart, which is of value with him. If therefore the light of nature, or the light of the Law hath more power upon the heart and spirit of an *Heathen* or *Jew*, then the light of the Gospel hath upon thee, who lookest upon thy self as a Christian, he must needs be more acceptable to God. The truth is, These things in the letter, do advance, but to an happiness in the letter, wherein the *Jew* hath the advantage of the *Heathen*, and the *Christian* of the *Jew*: but any of these lights in the Spirit do advance to an happiness in the Spirit, and here the *Heathen* may go beyond either the *Jew* or the *Christian*.

Look about you, look about you, O ye sons of men, for great is the sweetness and loving-kindness of God toward you: and yet so great is the present distance of your natures from his, that he is necessitated to hide his bowels, and to cloath himself with fierceness and cruelty to devour you. Yet let us all rather fall into the greatest severity of thy hand, O our God, then be releev'd by the sweetest visitation and redemption of flesh! The destruction which thou hastenest upon all flesh, is more profitable for them, then that salvation and happiness which they of themselves desire. This is evidently written in thy nature, and cannot but appear where thy nature is made manifest. To thee, O everlasting Fountain of Righteousness, Blessedness and Life, be the praise of thine own Holy Name and Spirit for evermore, Amen.

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THE

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A N
EXPOSITION
O N
The First Epistle
O F
I O H N.

Wherein the Nature of True Life,
with its most natural and proper operations, effects and course, is distinguished from the vain and gaudy appearances of all false lights, which are but darkness.

I s A. 51. v. 7, 8.

Hearken unto me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my Law. fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

For the Moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

EXHIBIT

of

H O

Warrant to arrest the body of the said
person named and property of the said
person named, to wit: the said person named
and the said property of the said person named.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this
day of the month of the year of the said
person named.

Notary Public for the State of the said
person named.

THE P R E F A C E.



Had intended the conclusion of this Book, as is before expressed. This addition which here follows, the delay of the Press was partly an occasion of, falling in with that desire which is kindled in me, of finishing my testimony with my daies. My Spirit is now grown somewhat more willing then hitherto, to serve the Lord, and his people, and the world in this way. I have had no design at all in me, nor no enmity at any sort of persons, but have testified as freely against my self as against any, and do still acknowledg that I also am a sinner like others, and have need of a Saviour throughout. If any thing of life and truth hath broke forth from me; That is not mine, nor have I in my soul sought the honour thereof, thereby to lift up my self above any. But as I cal out to others to pray for eyes to discover and discern their vanity, and witness to them that that is not life or righteousness or truth, which they cal so, and think shal live for ever, but is designed to death and the grave: so do I also earnestly desire and wait for my own death, and my own grave. I do not reproach any for sins or weaknesses; no, I do not reproach my self, whom I have usually been more bold with then with others: but I mourn over them, and I mourn likewise very deeply over the present estate of my own Spirit, and also of my fleshly nature. I am a miserable slave in both, and the day of my redemption is not yet come. If any can hide these things from their eyes, and keep this sorrow from their hearts, I envy them not: I only wish they could do it as I myself fain would, viz. by the presence of the truth, that the sight of these things might never afterward be manifested to

their disadvantage and further trouble. Mighty is the righteousness, holiness, and salvation of the Lord; yea and many are the bulwarks, defences, and salvations of mans Spirit, which the Lord may effectually batter down, before he discover his own. God hath formerly built the Spirit of man, under a shape of renovation and conversion from its own nature unto God; hath got into his buildings, and appeareth there as his Spirit; yea, man hath reared abundance of his own buildings, though he saith, not he, but the Lord hath built them. The Lord will down with both these, and build again: for he will have no house, but of his own building; and such an house of his own building, as no unclean thing shall be able to enter into any more. Happy is he who is broken down in the nature, way and course of his own fleshly Spirit, that he may become a stone in this building! Happy is he who is taught by God to sell all his knowledge of Christ, al his faith, all his love, all his obedience, all his hopes, prayers, and whatsoever else was excellent in his eyes, for the truths sake! These things were indeed very excellent as they came forth from God, but they are now very vile as man hath gathered them into, and bringeth them forth in his own fleshly Spirit. The Lord effect his own counsel, according to the wisdom, righteousness, power, and love of his own nature, and let the desire and prayer of no flesh have here any power with him. Amen.

AN EXPOSITION

ON

The first Epistle of John.

CHAP. I.

VER. 1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life:*

THere was a beginning of all things that now are. Those things which now appear, and indeed are, according to our sense, were not from the beginning. But there is somewhat which was from the beginning, and which still is, and appears in that light wherein he is hid from all other eyes.

This *which was from the beginning*, which the eye of man never saw, nor can see, those who were taken into that light wherein he appeared, did plainly behold. They heard his voice, they saw his shape, they beheld him, they looked upon, they handled his Spirit with the hands of their Spirit.

There is a new creation, a new creature, a new eye, a new hand and senses. This eye sees, this eye looks into, this hand handles the Word of Life, even the first,

first, the full, the only original product of life from the Father.

MA

V.E.B. 2. (*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*)

Would ye know what that was which was from the beginning? ~~Why, it was the life.~~ It was the life which was in the Father, and which the Father breathed into the Son, and which the Son breathed into man and the rest of the creation: or rather, it was the substance of that life, from whence all the several sorts of shadowy representations, throughout the whole creation, had their rise and being.

And would ye know how we came to see it? Why, it was by the manifestation thereof. The life was brought forth in a visible appearance, fitted to that eye which God had formed in us to see it with. *The life was manifested.* It had long lain hid, but it was at length manifested. It had been long wrapped up in the God-head, but at length God fitted a body for it, and brought it forth here in the world among the creatures. And though the world knew him not, no nor his own people the Jews neither: yet there was in us (whom he pleased so new make and quicken) an eye created, formed, and opened, which could see the life, and it was presented to that eye. The Spirit of the Lord held the life to the eye of our Spirit, and our Spirit beheld it. *The life was manifested, and we have seen it.*

And we have not only seen it, but we bear witness of it, and hold it forth. We testify that the life did appear, that that manifestation of the life in the flesh was a very true one. We witness to the world that it was the truth, such as we have had all the demonstrations of higher senses

sences then the world is acquainted with, to make it manifest unto us. Nay we are able to go further, where there is an eye, we can shew them this life. This life we have remaining with us (for we are of his flesh and of his bones) we have the same nature with him, and the same anointing from him. That same eternal life which was with the Father, and which appeared in the Son, abideth still in us. It was not only manifested to us, or within our own Spirits, but it is left with us to manifest. And we have shewn and do shew it unto you; as your Spirits can testify with us.

VER. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Iesus Christ.*

This is the way of shewing the life, namely, by declaring it: to hold it forth to the eye of that understanding, which is created in Christ to discern it. By manifestation or declaration of a thing, it comes to be seen and known. Thus they came to see and know the life, viz. by the manifestation of it. And thus others come to be acquainted with it through their means, viz. by their declaration and manifestation of it unto them. Declare the crucifying of Christ to a spiritual eye, and it sees him crucified: declare his resurrection, and it sees him risen. As in this natural understanding, any thing which is fairly opened to its capacity, it can receive: so is it in the spiritual also. And what is thus held forth, is shewn: and what is thus received in, is seen.

Now, *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.* The nature of this life, the vertue of this, the motions and operations of this life; the sweetness, fulness, excellency and communicativeness of this life; That

which we have certainly known and observed concerning it: for we have seen it move, we have heard it speak, we have beheld it acting in glory, might, Majesty and power. This we declare to you. What we our selves have been enamboured of, overcome with, and made happy by, the same we represent and declare to you, that you by this declaration of ours may fall in love with it, give up your selves to it, and have fellowship with us, that your Spirits may see, feel, enter into, and enjoy the same things with us. We hold out the same light and life to you, wherewith we our selves are enlightened and quickened, that ye may walk no longer in death and darkness, but have fellowship with us in the life and in the light. (It is natural both to light and to darkness, to spread abroad and gather in what they can unto themselves.)

And truly our fellowship is no contemptible fellowship, but of the greatest honour and advantage that can be: for it is no less then with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The Father and Christ have perfect fellowship in all that they are. God hath perfect fellowship with Christ, in all that he hath begotten and brought forth in him: And Christ hath perfect fellowship with God, in all that he originally is: And we have fellowship with both though not yet perfect. We have a true taste of the product of life in Christ, and of the originality of life in God.

VER. 4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Joy ariseth from the pleasure and satisfaction of nature. When nature is contented, when nature is satisfied, there's joy: When nature is interrupted and disturbed, there's sorrow. There are two things which make this life joyfull and

and pleasant, viz. *The light of this world*; and *The enjoyment of, and communion with the Spirit of this world in that light*. Light is comely and cheerful, Darkness is deformed and uncomfortable. (The estate of Hell, or misery, is fitly hereby represented to our understanding, viz. by being represented as an estate of utter darkness.) And so communion is the sweetness of life. Man is made a sociable creature, and his chiefest pleasure and content lieth in the enjoyment of his own natural Spirit in others. He that is alone, hath neither vent for his own nature, nor the advantage of receiving in what his nature desireth from others.

Thus it is also Spiritually. Spiritual joy ariseth from the pleasure and satisfaction of the Spiritual nature. When the Spiritual Nature is satisfied with the supply of its Spiritual wants, desires, and delights, ther's joy: When it is interrupted and crossed, ther's sorrow. When Spiritual Light breaks in upon the soul, when God shines forth and looks upon it with a pleasant eye, O how it springs forth with joy! The light of his countenance puts such gladness into its heart, as the Spirit of this World is not acquainted with, nor can ~~it~~ suck from any thing of this world, as *Psal. 4. v. 6, 7*. But when God hides his face, O how it is troubled. (*In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast sealed strength for my mountain: thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled, Psal. 30. v. 6, 7.*) When it hath the sight of God and Christ, and fellowship with the root of its life in them, it cannot but rejoyce: when God is hid, or Christ taken away, it cannot but mourn and pine. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoyce, And your joy no man taketh from you, *Ioh. 16. 22*.

That your joy may be full. Joy ariseth from the nature of these things, fullness of joy from the fullness of these things.

things. He that hath light from God and Christ, and communion with God and Christ, cannot but have joy; but he that aboundeth in these, cannot but also abound in joy. Now God intending to give forth in the Gospel a full dispensation of life and sweetness, did cause that to abound from whence it did arise, that thereby it might most certainly abound also. He gave forth plentiful Gospel light, and plentiful admission into the things of his nature and spirit, that his servants and children might be filled with, and abound in joy. This was the reason of the abundant manifestation of the life in Christ to the Apostles, and of their communion with God and Christ in all Spiritual blessings, and of their holding of these things forth to others, namely, that both they and others might drink and be satisfied with the sweetness of God through Christ, in this dispensation of his in the Gospel. *These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

VER. 5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

Men knoweth not God. Mans reason cannot search out God. All the knowledge which man hath of God, is by Gods discovering of himself unto him. He who lieth in the bosom of God, he can form in man an ear to hear, and he can make God known unto that ear; yea he can send messages of God unto men; whereby they may come to understand his nature. In this broken estate of man, deceitful are all the workings of his mind concerning God; and by the darkness of his Spirit he only forms a God like unto himself, but misseth of the truth. All the true discoveries of God spring from God himself, and are conveyed through Christ unto that new life

which

which springs from Christ. The very seed of God are taught the things of God by messages from Christ. They live and are made rich by the treasures of life, which God pours into them out of those earthen vessels, where in he hath placed it for that very purpose.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you.

This is the main thing, which Christ received from the Father, and left with us as the principle to propagate Gospel, light, and life by. This is that which we heard, and which we are to declare, and lay as the foundation and prop of all the building of God in mens Spirits. This is the bottome-principle, whereupon the whole Gospel, with all the life, sweetness, excellency and happinefs of it depends and turns. So that take away this, you take away all the knowledg, all the faith, al the hope, all the life, all the blessedness that is of, in, and by the Gospel. This is the way for us to lead you into, and for you to obtain the fulness of joy: for this joy (Gospel joy) is begun, increased, and perfected by the souls union and communion with this Fountain of Light, and by its separation from darkness. This then is it, namely, *that God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all*: So that he is a true Saviour, even by his own nature, for he can only lead into light and not into darkness. There is none of that spiritual darkness in God, which is now found in man: but it sheweth from Satan, as he is distinct and separated from God. God only delivereth from it: God only leadeth out of it, and not into it. He hath none of it in him, and therefore cannot beget or communicate it. *This is the message*, this is the bottome-principle, which infused into the Spirit, doth form it, and set it right in the state of the Gospel. It points us toward the true light, and toward the expecting and receiving of this light from the fountain. And upon this strain

you shall find the whole Gospel run : It discovers to men their darkness, springing from a principle distinct from God, and points them to God as a Fountain of Light, wherein is none of that darkness, but perfect cleansing and separation from it.

God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all.

The Nature of God is Light, and such Light as excludes all manner of darkness. There is no conceiving of God by any apprehension, nor is he to be expressed by any name : The nearest men can go in rising up to any apprehension of him, is by drinking in conceptions according to his expressing of himself unto them ; by utterly removing from him what he saith doth not at all resemble him, and by conceiving him to be the Spirit of that, or the Spirit of that to be in him, by which he shadoweth out or liketh himself. Thus he is all strength, no weakness ; all wisdom, no folly ; all goodness, no evil ; all love, no hatred ; all light, no darkness ; all perfection in every kind, no imperfection in any kind. Weakness, folly, hatred, darkness, &c. are imperfections ; They are the cumberances of an imperfect state, There is no room for them in the fulness and perfection of God.

God is Light. Perfect cleanness, perfect brightness, clear in himself, clearing every thing, dispelling darkness, scattering all the effects of it. If the Lord did not at present hide his light under a bushel, no darkness could remain. All the sorrow, enmity, trouble, yea, all the mists and fogs of the whole creation, would soon vanish at the rising of his Sun.

God is Light. God is the true substance of that light, which all other lights do but shadow : so that they are no light, they are but the appearances, but various resemblances of the light which is in him : but indeed they are the best resemblances we have. Light is pure, light is purifying,

purifying, light is true in it self, and the true discoverer of all things. O how excellently doth this shadow out God! He is the Holy One, the great Refiner, the Truth; to him all things are known, and by him all things are opened, even the most secret, such as no other light can search, (Heb. 4. 13.) In him, and in him alone, is every thing truly and fully seen. Out of him things are only seen as they are not, but in him as they are.

In him is no darkness at all.

There is no darkness in the body of the Sun, though the body of the Sun cast its shadow. There is nothing but purity and brightness in the deity. The Lord by his wonderful skil can create darkness, but yet it hath no place in him who created it: No more hath light neither (if we could speak properly :) but yet light doth fitly resemble the nature of him to us, which darkness doth not; so that we may truly say God is Light, Light is a true Hieroglyphick of him, but darkness is not so. Therefore in the day of the Lord, sorrow and sighing, and all manner of shadows that proceed from darkness, must fly away. The Lord will as cleerly and fully dispel all manner of darkness by his presence, as ever the Sun did the darkness of the night: And darkness shall never be known, heard of, or live any more, otherwise then it can be shrunk into and found in the light: And there being no room for it there, it must needs be excluded, even as the light of the day doth drive away and exclude the darkness of the night, so that it is vanished, it is gone, where is it? God is not any darkness, God is not any evil; but he is that great Ocean of light and purity which drowns all darkness, which drowns all evil so as it can be found no more. When perfect light, when perfect good, when perfect love fills all, enoys all is enjoyed by all; what room will there be left for darkness, for evil, for the devil who is the fountain of hatred and enmity?

VER.

VER. 6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lye, and do not the truth.*

God is *Light*, pure *Light*, perfect *Light*. He lives, he walks in his own *Light*. Darknes hath no fellowship with him now: and when it comes neer him, it shall receive its destruction from him. He is *Spiritual Light* and *Goodness*, and so is most remote from that which is spiritually dark and evil. And if we have fellowship with him, we live and walk in his light; and so are, with him, very remote from darkness. We are the death of it, we kill it where ever we come, but can have no communion with it. If therefore we walk in darkness, if our motions are from and according to the spirit of this world and our own nature, we lye in saying we have fellowship with him: And our course, our conversation, our practise is the fruit of our own lye, and not a correspondency to his truth in us. We are not herein the children of truth, observing the truth of God, but the lye of Satan and of own hearts. There is in the nature of true light, the discussing of the darkness which is contrary to that light: he therefore that walketh in any kind of darkness, cannot possibly have fellowship with that light, which is thus by its nature separated from the darkness. *What communion hath light with darkness?* Or what communion can he have with darkness, who hath fellowship with the light? He in whom the light of life hath slain the very nature and spirit of iniquity, and taken him into the fellowship of its own purity, how can he any longer live or walk in iniquity? No, no, he is a liar who ever thus pretendeth: for he that partaketh in the nature of the light, is thereby taught the true abstraction and separation from darkness, which stil goeth along with its nature.

VER.

VER. 7. *But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then have we fellowship one with another, and the blood of Iesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

If we walk in the light.

There is a light, a new light, an inward light, a spiritual light for the spirit of the new creature. As there is a light in this world, suitable and fit for the nature of this world: so is there in the new world also. All the apprehensions of man (though never so high raised) are not this light: and all the elevations of man in the highest ascent of this light (as he accounts it) carry not in them the least true touch of that kind of life, which lives in and flows from this light. O Lord God, where is this light! how palpable is it, that the greatest light in the most raised spirits now a daies, is but darkness!

This light is to guide the spirit of the new creature in the motions of life. He is to walk by it, yea he is to walk in it, he is to keep within the compass of it. He is to discern, and judg, and order all his steps and actions by it. He is to live in the light, and move in the light, and not to step one step without it. The spirit of man, yea the bastardly spirit of man (*viz.* that which is mis-begotten in a dispensation of light, and is not of the truth) cannot set one step in the light, but is comprehended within the vanity and darkness of his own mind, though he seems delivered from it: and the true Spirit of the child cannot set one step out of the light. He is as uncomfortable and shiftless without this light (and knows no more how to do any thing) as the ordinary creature is or can be without the light of this world. In this night no spiritual man can work.

As he is in the light.

God is Light, all Light, all in Light. The Lord is
K k k k never

never in the dark, nor doth he ever do any thing in the dark, but fetcheth all his motions in the purity and perfection of his own light. Thus it is with him who hath fellowship with God, who (in his degree) is admitted into the same light, who hath a true ray of the same light in him, and shining about him. He is in, he lives in, he moves in, he walks in that ray of light; as God doth in the fountain of light.

We have fellowship one with another.

True spiritual communion hath its foundation in the spirit. Every thing that is truly spiritual lives in the spirit, and hath communion with all that lives there. The spirit is a true body, whereof every particular member is not only a part, but also, being quickened, liveth and hath communion with the body. If we are truly spiritual, and our spirits meet in the same light of God, then have we true communion. We think communion is tied up to presence in body: but we may as well communicate in spirit, though absent in body, as we may be divided in spirit, though present in body. And this was the foundation of publique communion in those daies; it arose from the union of life in their spirits. *God, Christ, Saints, Angels*; He that knoweth one, knoweth all, both in their oneness and distinctions. Alas, we talk of these things, but we hardly have any knowledg of them, so much as in the outward notion, but what would sal before any considerable puff of wind!

And the blood of Iesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Christ who was the Son of God, who was begotten of him, and brought into the world by him, he powred out his blood an offering for sin, he died to purge away sin, to cleanse his body, to purify his flesh from all its corruption and contagion: and by his death, by his blood he washeth it of. But it is from *us*: He purifieth not the world,

world, but his Church. And *we* too in the light: from us is fellowship with God. From us walking not in the darkness of the spirit of this world, but in the light of the Lord; There is no purification elsewhere, but in the light of the Lord alone. The blood of Christ is treasured up within the vail, and there only it purifieth him who is found there, who liveth there, who walketh there, who hath the faith in him that is of that stamp. Ah foolish man! dost thou, who livest in this world, in thine own fleshly spirit, by mounting up into high notions or warm apprehensions concerning Christ, and faith, &c. I say, dost thou hereby think to live and be cleansed? Thou maist at present please thy self with these things, but thou wilt find the very nature and root of thy spirit unclean, unpurified, one day. But in the other life, in the land of the living, the blood of Christ doth truly purge away all sin, and cleanse both the spirit and flesh from it. Those who are born of God, those who live in God, those who walk with God; they feel the vertue and power of God upon them, according to the need of their present state. They are continually washed in the fountain, which God hath set up in Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. There is no iniquity can surprise them in the flesh, which the blood of Christ cannot or doth not cleanse them from. Whatsoever overtaketh or can overtake them, though never so much and never so often, in their spiritual course (for they may be exceedingly weak in and through the flesh) the blood of Iesus Christ incessantly washeth away. He that is of and liveth in this world (whereof we now speak) hath the free use of all those things which are in it: He may come as readily to the blood of Christ (and partake of the vertue of it) as ever the Jews did to the blood of their sacrifices.

VER. 8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us.*

Notwithstanding our purification from sin, there remains sin in us. Sin is taken away, yet so as that it still remains. And we are pure and without sin, yet so as that we are still sinners, and continually sinning. And if we think or say otherwise, this is but the deceit of our own hearts; this ariseth from the root of deceit which is in our spirits, and is such a deceit as cannot stand with the truth of God. If that were indeed sown in us, it could not suffer such an apprehension to rise up and take place in us. Such imaginations (for they are no better) arise not from being in the light, or from the knowledge of the truth, but from the nature and spirit of darkness and deceit. And where they arise, they cannot be in the truth, for that would fight with them, subdue them, and evidence the contrary. The light doth so evidently manifest darkness, that he that is in the light cannot but see and acknowledge it. And he that knoweth what sin is, notwithstanding his new nature, will also know himself as yet a sinner, and will (with thankfulness to God) acknowledge his need of that advocate and way of cleansing, which God hath prepared for his people. Observe hence these three weighty considerations.

1. That when the true way of purging away of sin was made manifest, there was even then a false way: and that false way was more seemingly glorious, for that false way did seem so to take away sin, as that the persons could say, *we have no sin.*

2. That this false way, with all its light and glory, ariseth from a mans own deceitful spirit. It is but the deceit which Satan hath sown in his heart, which he receiving and falling in with, it becomes his own.

3. That

3. That those persons who are seasoned with this deceit, are not seasoned with the truth: For the truth, entering into the spir it, would keep out this deceit; as this deceit, being entered, keepeth out the truth. *And the truth is not in us*, I N U S; be we who we wil, men, never so much enlightened, men who seem to live in the very light and fellowship of himself, yet if there be such a principle as this in us, to be sure *the truth is not in us*.

VER. 9. *If we confess our sins; he is faithful, and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

The light of the Lord discovereth sin, and he that is in the light (but as yet not fully involved therein) seeth what sin is, what a sinner he was, and that he still is a sinner. He seeth cleerly the pollution of his flesh, and of the body of sin in him, which yet hangeth about him, and hath an influence into all his motions, in some degree still tainting them. Till the flesh be thoroughly cleansed, while it is to joyn in any action, it cannot but be like itself. There is indeed *a new leaven* which overspreads the flesh, and so far as the flesh relisheth of that leaven, it sins not: but yet the old leaven is not quite gone, there still remaineth somewhat of its own; and while that remains, it will be stealing in the nature of sin into every thing we are, or think, or do.

Hereupon he is ready to confess his sin; to bemoan it before God, and seek with his soul the remission of it.

The unregenerate man, or the man who is begotten and brought forth in that light which is not the truth, cannot rightly confess sin. He seeth not his sin for the most part; and that which he seeth, he most naturally seeketh to hide. But he ~~that~~ is in the light cannot but see,

and in true ingenuity of spirit acknowledg, and seek redemption from that darkness and corruption which yet remaineth in him, and is still giving an ill savour to all that comes from him.

And he that thus runneth to God with shame and confession, with his sin and the loathsomeness thereof thus written on his forehead, God cannot but releeve. He hath engaged himself not only in his word, but his very nature stands engaged to pity, help, and save such: *Him that cometh to me, I wil in no wise cast out.* God cannot but be faithful and just to that light of his which thus leads souls to him: He cannot but be faithful and just to the blood of Christ, which was powred out to this very end, to wash away sin from these: He cannot but be faithfull to these poor souls, who from his own guidance, and according to his own word, in their misery thus cast themselves upon him. Nay if it were possible for him to neglect pardoning of such a soul, not only the faithfulness and justice of his word, but of his very nature too would be questioned by himself.

Yea and he will *cleanse them from al unrighteousness*, even from all the unstraitness and unrighteousness which is yet left in their spirits, or in any part of their natures, and from all the unrighteousness which yet accompanieth any of their motions or actions: his faithfulness and justice to Christ, to them, to himself, and to all that light and grace which flowes from him, most strictly engaging him thereunto.

VER. 10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

God hath made provision for the sin of his people: He hath provided an *Intercessor*, an *Advocate* in Heaven, to keep all straight between him and them. As he provided
Sacrifices

Sacrifices and *Priests* for his people the *Jews* under the Law, so hath he here (for that people he hath picked out to walk with him under the Gospel) provided a more powerful Priest, and a more ~~effective~~ *Actual* sacrifice. But now if his people have not sinned, if after they are once cleansed by him they sin no more, then is he a liar in making that provision for them, which their condition needeth not. If they have no sins to be interceded for, then hath he deceived them in providing an Advocate for them, and in appointing this work unto him. Thus we do, if we say we have not sinned, *we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. We are not persons changed by the power of his truth, sanctified by his truth (*Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth*) we are not persons in whom the word of life dwels, but such as know it not, such as in whom it is not. For if the word of God did dwell in us, it would teach us to know God, it would teach us to acknowledg him in his dispensations: when therefore we learn and beleeve things so contrary to truth, and to the discoveries which God hath been pleased to make, and make him a liar even in the things which he hath purposely picked out to manifest his truth, we plainly discover that *his word, his truth is not in us*: but we are persons led away and captived by the deceits of Satan, joyning with the vanities of our own minds.

CHAP. II.

VER. I. *My little Children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Iesus Christ the righteous.*

My little Children.



Simon Peter loveth thou me, said Christ: Feed my Lambs. And Iohn, who very well knew his mind, applies himself to his Lambs, to his little ones. They need nourishment often, yea and need their food much prepared for them. They are aptest to stumble upon sin, and like to receive greatest danger from sin. They are most prone to run into sin (through their ignorance and weakness) and, when they have so done, to run from their Advocate. Therefore Iohn especially warneth them concerning both these. Sin not, saith he, be as shy of sin as possibly ye can, turn from it as from the poison of your spirits; And yet withal know there is a remedy against this poison: if any man sin, we have an Advocate.

These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.

I do not write these things to you to incourage you in sin, the sweetness & tenderness of God to you in the midst of all your failings should not make you careless concerning sin, or bold unto sin, but should quicken and rouse up in you the vertue of your light, and the vigour of your life, to separate you more and more from the paths of death and darkness. This is the intention of God in his
sweet

sweet declarations of love, life, and salvation by Christ in the Gospel; and this is the way which the nature of the child makes thereof. That which takes occasion by any light to run into sin, plainly discovers both what that light is, and what his own nature is. The true light cannot lead them, the true nature of the child cannot follow thus. This is the bastardly spirit, walking in a bastardly light.

And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.

The new man, the living spirit applies himself to avoid sin, to keep out sin: but sin, being within, cannot be wholly kept out. Therefore he is still addressing himself to his Advocate to heal him, to change him, to intercede for him in that way which God hath appointed. He that is grown in understanding, doth not forbear or turn from sin for fear of it (for that he cannot do, leaving what a Saviour he hath): but from his own nature. He knows if he doth sin, that he hath an Advocate, and therefore he doth not value any thing sin can do to him; and yet, from his own nature, he cannot but elsewhere it as much as if he had no Advocate. Now, saith John, *little children*. I would not have you sin, but these things I write to turn your spirits against sin; but if ye do sin, be not thereby affrighted from the Father, but rather address your selves to him for healing, and for fresh strength, knowing that ye have an Advocate with him.

For Jesus Christ the righteous, or he that is made righteous. This Advocate hath been anointed by God, and hath bin an exceeding tender Saviour to sinners. And though he plead with the Father (with whom the Son cannot but be gracious); yet he doth all in righteousness, for the Lord hath called *that in righteousness*. It is righteous that he should plead for you, for he is your Advocate; and it is righteous that he should take away your sins from the

eye of the Father, and from your own consciences too, for to that end was he anointed, qualified, and called by God in righteousness to be a Saviour to you, and an Intercessor for you.

VER. 2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins.*

Sin is not now so dangerous to us as it was, because we have a remedy at hand, and know the way to it. Christ is the remedy, and Christ is the way. We have nothing to plead but Christ, nor need we plead any thing more, for he is our propitiation. He who is our Advocate, is our atonement. He makes peace between the Father and us continually by the blood of the everlasting Covenant.

And not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

There is an universal way open to the mercy of God in Christ for all the world. And though the world knoweth not the way to this salvation, yet God knoweth how to overtake them therewith in his own season, when he hath finished that death and misery which they are now so fast running into, and wherein he will so certainly seal them up. But shall the vertue of Christ for ever and ever (in the utmost sense) be hid from the world? God forbid. Can the mercy of God come off clearly, if there be any sin which it cannot cover? Or his love and goodness, if there be any sin which he will not? There is mercy in the Nature of God toward the nature of the whole creature, this is most certain: and can their sin and misery perfectly stop up his bowels? Nay doth it not rather occasion the opening of them? Shall the Nature of God forget to pity and do good to the nature of the creature, because it is now so leavened with evil, as that it is become evil? No, no, there is a covering, there is a propitiation for the whole world, there is mercy in the

Nature of God, and in the Nature of Christ, toward them all, after what manner, or in what season, it shall be drawn over them, the Lord knoweth. The curtain of life hath spread larger and larger from the beginning, and can it possibly leave still at hath overshadowed all? Within the first veil the *Jews* were included; from the second none were excluded; and what shall be the extent of the third? I am not afraid to speak what I have felt and seen (after a sort) in the nature of life, and know that it can introduce no other destruction than it self, in the like case, would undergo.

VER. 3. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.*

All life ariseth from the knowledg of God; The natural life from the natural knowledg of him. The spiritual life from the spiritual knowledg of him. Eternal life from the Eternal knowledg of him. (*This is life Eternal, that they might know thee the only True God, & Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*) He that doth not at all know God, doth not live, hath not the life of his own nature in him. True knowledg is the food of the life of man, and mans soul cannot live without it, no more then his body can without the food thereof. That man that hath no intercourse with God, that doth not love him, cannot trust him or hope in him, that hath no true goings forth toward him, nor no true inlets into his spirit from him, how doth he live? In the very day that *Adam* became naked, stripped of the light and knowledg of God, he died the death.

And as all life lies in knowledg: So all the sweetness and refreshment of life lies in the sense and reflection of knowledg. He that doth not know that he knows, loseth the sense of the benefit of his knowledg. What comfort can he have of his knowledg, or what use can he make of

is, who both not know that he hath it. So that the most
 thing desirable after he having of true knowledge, is to
 know that one hath it. This excellent we have received and
 riches of life from in the spirit, yea and to possess but al-
 to have them opened in and to the spirit.

Now this is the way to know where there is the know-
 ledge of Christ indeed and in truth, namely by the ver-
 tue, by the power of it springing up in a mans spirit, and
 breaking forth in his life. Christ hath commands proper
 to those whom he quickens and enlightens, even as the
 Father hath for the Child, or the Master for the Servant.
 How is a Child or Servant known but by their obedience
 to the commands of their Father or Master? Neither
 knoweth not the Law or Tye of any relation, knoweth
 not the relation. Without this he is but in the shadow or
 appearance of it, but not in the true nature of it. So he
 that knoweth not the will of Christ, he that knoweth
 not how to obey and keep his commandment, he doth
 not really know Christ in truth, how high so ever he ap-
 prehend himself to be in the knowledge of him. There are
 three things, in reference to the Commandments of
 Christ, to be found in those who know him, all which
 with the obedience of their spirits, issuing from them, is
 evidence their knowledge of Christ.

1. There is the light of Christ in them, teaching them these
 commandments. That light which teacheth to know
 Christ, must needs lead to the knowledge of his will, and
 of those commands which flow from his will. The first
 great stroke of Christ upon the soul, is especially upon
 the will, which he reneweth and changeth more and
 more by setting his will into the spirit, and by subjecting
 the spirit thereunto. And indeed the great intercourse
 between Christ and his people is by commands on the
 one hand, and by obedience on the other. This makes
 the enemy to wonderfully busy to draw a man from the
 yoke,

politic, and but to spare any of the most taking spiritual
 lappets hee too placeth with him, hee runto, because here-
 dy hee miserably interrupts the work of life and reno-
 mation, and stops all strict converse and intercourse be-
 tweene Gods hand and the soul.

2. *There is a naturalness in their spirits towards them.*
 Their spirits and natures, naturally look after the Com-
 mandments of Christs Nature, and naturally receive
 them from his lips, and naturally bring them forth in
 their motions and operations. The Law of the new life,
 shewes soul thirsts after and drinks in again.

3. *There is a power in them.* There is a power in
 every life. The Commandments of Christ are living,
 and are the power of this life. As in mans corrupt na-
 ture, there is not only a naturalness, but a power to sin
 and unrighteousness. So in this nature, in this life, there is a pow-
 er to holiness, which the living commands of Christ, al-
 mays doth light and feed.

Ye see there is a spirit, even the Spirit of Christ dwelling
 in them, spreading this light about them, increasing this
 naturalness, and quickening and adding this power of life,
 so that they find they oke and commands of Christ more
 and more easy and pleasant to them day by day. Now
 thereby they know that they know him, finding that
 wrought in their spirits, and springing up in their spirits,
 which can only be wrought and spring up from the true
 knowledge of Christ, they cannot but see, and feel, and
 say, and conclude that they do know Christ.

W. F. R. 24. *It is his spirit, I know him, and I say not his
 commandments, for I know that the truth is not in him.*

The Gospel is like a net, which gathers a great many
 fishes, but many, (if not most of them, are) afterwards
 thrown away for use. The light of the Gospel hath

power to conquer and overcome man (it comprehend his reason) and to lead him to the knowledge and acknowledgment of Christ. Now man receiving this into his natural spirit, and believing the incarnation of Christ, his holy life, his bitter death, his glorious resurrection and ascension, with his intercession and coming to judgment, &c. he is very apt from hence to conclude that he knoweth Christ. Yea if a false spirit, with a false light, boyn in with his spirit, it will raise him much higher; insomuch as he will be ready to think and conclude within himself, that he knows Christ more spiritually, then those that seem to him to build upon these things in the letter.

But all this will not make the true will and commands of Christ natural to him; insomuch as he cannot for his heart walk with Christ; in the free and delightful observation of them; but either he must find out some by-path, wherein he may slight these as mean things, and not so needful, or else he goes on very heavily; by the weight of necessity, and not by his own inclination.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not, &c.

Man naturally seeketh the sweet benefit and effects of the knowledge of Christ; and as naturally avoideth the yoke, viz. the Law of his nature and life. *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* This is the voice of mans nature. And according to this inclination in man, he hath great skill and subtilty to wind himself into the advantages which flow from union with Christ and the knowledge of him, and yet to keep himself free from the yoke and power of his nature and spirit. He will say, *I know him*, and yet he will not be an observer of his *Commandements*. He is free, he is spiritual, and is not to be tied to any Law; no not to the Law and Commandements of Christ. Yea this very light and liberty he hath from Christ; (from his Spirit) from his

his union and acquaintance with him. Why this man saith *John* who ever he be or what ever he appear, *is a liar*. He is a liar in his own heart, in the nature of his Spirit. The first rise hereof is a lye, and his whole progress and course herein, is a continuing and publishing of that lye which his spirit within him hath made.

And the truth is not in him. The True Light, the True Life, the True Nature is not in him. He may have a glittering light in his spirit, and great joy and content therein, but neither his spirit, nor his light, nor his joy (nor any of those effects which seem so spiritual and precious in his eye) is the truth. The true root from whence all this groweth is not in him, and therefore that which doth shoot up in him is not the truth. And doubtless he must needs be a liar, in whom the truth is not.

Observ. True obedience to the Commandements of Christ is a necessary effect of the knowledge of Christ, and in that spirit where it is not, there is not the truth. The True Light of Christ is not in that Spirit: and therefore all that Light and Glory about him, wherewith he pleaseth himself so much, is but deceit, springing from that darkness wherein it will also end.

VER. 5. *But who so keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

Christ is the Word of God, his very Nature is the immediate writing of God: and being so, he could not but in his whole course, even in all his desires, designs, delights, yea in al his motions and operations, keep his word. They who are breathed by Christ, as Christ was by God, are Christs word. Their very nature is the writing of Christ: And it is as natural to them to keep Christs word, as it was to Christ to keep Gods. As the wicked are transgressors:

flows from the womb: so the righteous feel the Holy Nature, Law and Course of Christs Spirit from the womb. I mean from their very conception, and new birth in Christ.

Whose heareth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.

That from which the Nature of Christ and the word of Christ doth flow, is the love of God. And where that Nature is, there is both the love of God in it, and love in it to God, both which incline the Spirit to keep Christs Commandements, and are perfected thereby. The love of God in the soul dilates and perfects itself by bringing forth of fruit, and the love of the soul to God is dilated also and perfected by the same fruit.

He cannot love the Nature of Christ, or observe his word, in whom the love of God is not. The Word of Christ cannot be natural to any, but him who hath the Nature of Christ. He therefore that keeps his word, sheweth plainly that the true, the right, the perfected love is in him in a right and perfect way of growth. The love of God hath its scope, its perfect work on him: It doth as it were perfectly possess and fit him. The love of God hath entered into him, and hath effected what it entered for, having conformed him unto the Word of Christ, and having brought forth the word of Christ in him, in life and power.

Obedience springs from two things, from knowledge and from love: and it perfects both knowledge and love. A man can never be perfect either in knowledge and love by the theory, but by the use and practise of the principle thereof. He that obeys the Commandements of Christ, he still increaseth in the knowledge of them: and he that vents his love in obedience, he still grows in love. He that is perfect in obedience, is perfect not only in knowledge (without which it is impossible) but in love

too. So that by this means love is perfected : Perfect love, viz. love of a perfect nature, hereby grows unto its perfect stature.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a liar : he hath not the true light in him, or the true love in him : from both, or either of which this cannot flow. But he that keepeth his word, he is of the truth, he hath the true love of God in him, and true love flowing forth unto God from him, both which by this means grow unto perfection.

He that despises or neglects the Commandments of Christ, may seem to be filled with the love of God, may seem to have the love of God bound and be perfected in him : but it is but an appearance, it is not really so ; but here it is so truly, in him verily the love of God is perfected.

Hereby know we that we are in him.

By our conformity to the word of Christ, by the scope and power that the love of God hath in us in moulding us to the nature, life, and will of Christ, by being thus continually changed into God and into Christ, and having that brought forth in us which only flows from God through Christ, hereby we know that we are in God and in Christ. By the perfecting of the love of God in us through Christ, we know that we must needs be in him. If we were not transplanted into Christ, if we did not abide in Christ, we could not bring forth this fruit, the love of God could not lead us so naturally into it : therefore by the sweet nature and abundance of this fruit through the love of God, we know that we are in the root.

VER. 6. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

Christ is the life of a Christian. Christ is the root into which his Spirit sinks, the stock into which his Spirit is engrafted. So that there is his proper place wherein he is planted, and where he abides. If any man says that he is a Christian, he therein saith that he is transplanted into, and abides in Christ. The Spirit of a Christian, as it is taken out of the root and principle of this worldly nature, so it is brought forth a new in Christ, made a branch in him who is the *True Vine*, and there it remains.

Now he that is of Christ, he that abides in Christ, his life must needs be according to the vertue and nature of that root, in which he is and lives. He will not live like the world whose principle is contrary unto Christ, but like a soul which is leavened and taught by Christ. As Christ lived in the flesh, so will he live. The same Spirit which quickened and enabled Christ to walk as the pattern, will teach and enable him to follow the pattern. Christ in the flesh, was the pattern of all his in the flesh; and they that abide in Christ, and are taught by his Spirit, must learn those lessons which are proper to their Spirits in the flesh. They must tread the same path both of life and death, of love and hatred. Having the same nature of life, the same principle of life, the same end of life, they must take the same course after the same manner. It is a contradiction, a shame, a lye, a blasphemy for men to say they are in Christ, they abide in Christ, and to walk contrary to the Life and Spirit of Christ; to walk like men, to love like men, to hate like men, to esteem or despise (chuse or refuse) as man would. No, no, All their affections, all their motions, all their actions, all their desires, griefs, delights, &c. must

must be formed by the Spirit of Christ, according to the Nature and Life of Christ (answerable to that true and faithful example, which he himself gave in the flesh) not any of them suitable to the nature and Spirit of man, otherwise then as that nature is renewed and brought forth again in the Nature and Life of Christ.

VER. 7. Brethren, I write no new Commandment unto you, but an old Commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old Commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

Brethren, whom I write to and instruct from brotherly love, and with whom I my self am to walk, like a brother, in the same line of light. I write no new Commandment unto you; but, &c. I teach you not any new thing, but that which is old. I lay not any new injunction upon you; but that which ye had from the very first. That which Moses taught of old (yea it was taught long afore Moses) and that which Christ taught in his first ministry of circumcision, before he ascended. The old Commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning: That which Adam was taught in the letter of his nature and of the creatures; That which the Jews were taught in the letter of the Law by Moses; That which the Disciples were taught in the letter of the Gospel by Christ; All this is the old commandment. This is the word which was heard and taught from the beginning. This is the word which ye have already received; and as it is old in all these dispensations, so is it also with you.

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VER. 8. *Again, a new Commandement I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*

Again a new Commandement I write unto you.

I write unto you not only that which is old, but also that which is new. The letter is old, the Spirit is new. The same commandement which is old in the letter, is new in the Spirit. The whole Word of God is old in the old creation, in the nature of *Adam* and the creatures, in the dispensation of the *Jews*, yea in the old Discipleship of Christ's own flock: but new in the new creation, in the nature of the *new Adam*, in the new Jewship, in the new Discipleship. That which liveth only in the letter, must needs waxe old and wither: but that which liveth in the spirit, continually sucketh freshness and vigor thence, so that it cannot but still abide new.

Which thing is true in him and in you.

It is truly a new commandement in Christ and in you. It is still an old commandement to those that are in the letter; but 'tis new in Christ, and in you who are one with Christ in the Spirit: for it springs up and is fed from a new life in him, and it springs up and is nourished from the same breath of life in you. The whole word is passed away, is dead with him and with you in the letter; and it lives again in him, and in you through him, only in the newness of the Spirit. So that with Christ, and with you, this commandement is new indeed.

Because the darkness is past, and the True Light now shines.

There was darkness, thick darkness brake in upon *Adam* and the whole creation. This darkness, universally prevailing, hath kept all mankind from the light of life: yea this darkness hath so wrought it self into them, and
so

so overcome and subdued them, that they are become one with it, and cannot in this state comprehend the light, though the light should shine in them. *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.*

The light that shined in the nature of man, the light that shined in the Law of *Moses*, yea the light that shined in the life of *Christ* in the flesh, remaineth still uncomprehended by the spirit of man: but when these things are related to him, or acknowledged and highly prized by him in the flesh, yet even then there is a vail lies over him, that he cannot pierce into the truth. And in this condition he is not able to receive any of the new commandements of *Christ*, but only the old ones, which tend only further to kill him, but cannot quicken him. But when he is new made in *Christ*, when the light comprehendeth and taketh him into it self, expelling the darkness, then he is able to see the light, and the newness of things in the light.

Because the darkness is past, and the true light, &c.

Darkness hath its season both in things and persons, after which it is to pass away, and the true light to shine. It is already thus with *Christ*, and with those who are quickened by him. The darkness is past away from him, and the true light shineth in him. And those who are truly united to him, in whom his life is breathed and set up, the darkness is gone from them too, and the true light shineth in them also. And this is the reason that the word is new to them, that the commandement is new in them, because that darkness wherein it was old is gone, and that light wherein it is new, shineth in them, and to them, and round about them. O Lord God, where doth this light shine now! where is *Christ*, the True Light? And where are his seed, the True Children of Light?

This light which causeth all the veiles, and false appearances

pearances of darkness in stead of light, to pass away, is the true light; *The True Light now shineth.* There was a light did shine all the time of darkness (or rather darkness did strive to shine as if it had been the light) viz. *the light of the creature, the light of man, the wisdom of man, &c.* yea what several sorts of lights are there still up and down throughout the whole creation? Every sort and sect of men have their light. But all these are but false lights, all these are but darkness in reality. Indeed there are some true lights in their kind, true dark lights (as I may so say) which are very useful in the dark state of the creature; and he who parts with them, while he is in this dark creaturely state, will find a miss of them: but yet for all that they are not the truth, and he in whom the true light shines, cannot so acknowledg or use them.

VER. 9. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

The sum of all the commandements both new and old, is love. Love to God, and to man and the creatures, according to the letter of the Law; Love to God, and to Christ, and the brethren in Christ, yea and to all men and creatures, according to the letter of the Gospel; yea love to all these, according to the Spirit both of Law and Gospel; this is the sum of all the commandements of God. This every true light teacheth, but the light of life most perfectly. He therefore that hath not learned this lesson, is not translated into the light, but his spirit still remaineth in the region of darkness.

A man may say he is in the light, and think by the light to maintain his hatred against his brother: for it is not his brother, but the evil in his brother which he is offended with. Great art hath the old nature, in this kind to ~~conceal~~ and bring forth its old enmity. But he
that

that doth not love and pity his brother in the midst of all his unlovelinesses, and be very tender of him, and deny himself for him in the midst of all his weaknesses, he wanteth love to him, yea he hateth his brother. He that, for the pleasing of himself in any thing, will run the hazard of his brothers soul, or of the peace thereof, how doth he love him? And he that thus hateth his brother, what great progress soever he may seem to have made in the light, whereby he is so abundantly able to walk in those steps, and do those things which are so offensive to his weak brother, yet he is not at all in the light. He is so far from having proceeded so far in the light, as he himself deems, that he hath not known what belongs to it, but is still in darkness. All this which he accounts light, and which is so pretious with him, is not the truth, is not the light he takes it for, nor hath he ever been in the light, but till this very time hath he remained, and is still in darkness.

VER. 10. *He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

Love springeth from light, as hatred from darkness. As therefore he that hateth, is in darkness: so he that loveth, is in light. And he that continueth in love, continueth in light. He that ceaseth from love, falleth from that light which did beget him, and bring forth love in him: (Wonder not at this, for as *Adam* did fall from the light wherein he was planted, and the *Jews* did fall from their light; so might, yea so did the *Disciples* from the light of that dispensation of the Gospel, and thereupon immediately did their love wax cold:) but he that abideth in love, abideth in the light. While that love remains in him which the light did beget in him, it plainly evidenceth that the light also which did beget it, still remaineth

maineth; and that his spirit, which was at first formed by it, is still wrapped up in it. The other was never in the light, his spirit never knew the True Nature either of light or love: at best he knew but the light and love of some dispensation, from which he is now fallen: But this spirit is in the truth, and abideth in the truth, as the nature and duration of his love evidenceth.

And there is no occasion of stumbling in him.

He that loves not, minds himself, the satisfying of himself, the pleasing of himself, not regarding what influence his liberty and pleasure have upon his brother. But he that loves his brother, seeks the good and welfare of his brother, readily denying himself, and his own liberty, delight, enjoyment and pleasure for his brothers sake. It is death to him to see his brother fall, and therefore he can by no means administer any occasion of stumbling to him. If his light be too high for his brother, he will veil it, and appear weak with him: (As true light begets and brings forth love: so it will nourish, yea serve it.) If any of his practises, or enjoyments of himself in his Christian liberty, be offensive to his brother, he naturally forbears them. For his life lies not in this or that particular strain of liberty, but in love; which, which way soever it have its course, is his delight and pleasure. He cannot enjoy any thing without love; and he can please himself, and feed his life, by the forbearance of any thing in love. He cannot offend his brother by upbraiding him with any of his weaknesses or failings, for love covers them, be they never so many or frequent: *Love covers a multitude of sins.* So that there can be no occasion of stumbling in him; for whatsoever is offensive to any, love removes from him: and this he doth, not in a meer foolishly affectionate manner, but the light wherein he abides, teacheth love so to do. For, *he that loves his brother, abideth in the light*

light, and from hence it is that there is no occasion of stumbling in him.

VER. 11. *But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

As there is a great deal of difference between love and hatred: so there is likewise a great deal of difference between those persons in whom these different principles, or seeds, are sown. There is a great deal of difference in the nature of their Spirits, in the estate and condition of their Spirits, in their course, and in their end. He that loves is light, and is in light, and walks in light, and unto light: But he that hateth is darkness, and in darkness, and walks in darkness, and unto darkness, which will be the end of all his travels and motions, though he know it not. *But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

Here are four things held forth concerning him in whom the principle of hatred dwels and reigns; and they are expressed in a way of difference and distinction from him that dwels in love: for it is not so with him in any of these respects, but wholly otherwise.

1. *He is in darkness.* Hatred floweth from darkness, therefore he that hateth, his Spirit is in the land of darkness, from whence he learneth this lesson. He may seem to be translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into Gods marvellous light, and to be in an estate of light; but he is not so, he is yet in the state of darkness. This is not to be understood concerning him who is weak and defective in love, but concerning him who wants the nature of love, and instead thereof hath the principle and nature of hatred in his spirit, though he may seem more

N n n n abundant

abundant as well in love as light, then he that hath the true nature of both in him. But his love, as well as his light, will betray it self, for though it may flow forth in high and lofty strains, yet, in the midst of all its glory, it will want that natural tenderness and consideration of others, which is the proper effect of love, which never is without bowels.

2. *He walks in darkness.* All his motions, his whole course is in darkness. He thinks that he walks in the highest light, in the clearest light, in the purest light; but alas poor soul, he walks in thick darkness! This his great light, is but painted light, which is not light. And though he seem to go far beyond his brother, and in the height of his light and spirituality not to mind him, yet all these his steps and motions fall short of the true nature of light, and are but the effects of darkness.

3. *He knows not whither he goes.* He knows not the end of this his state and motions. He hath many glorious apprehensions concerning his present estate and motions, but he doth not truly understand whereto they tend. Indeed he is very full of confidence concerning his light, and his motions therein; It is his weak brother that does not understand the extent of his light, nor the way he is to walk in; but he sees very clearly, and knows very well where he is, and whither he goes. He sees most certainly that all his steps are from light, and in light, and will lead him thither. Indeed thus he may do in his own darkness, which with him is most assured light, but he cannot do thus according to true light, so that he will be miserably disappointed in the end.

4. Here is the reason of all this, which is, *because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.* He would not remain in this state of darkness, he would not walk in this darkness, he would not go on thus he knows not whither, did he truly understand himself. But darkness hath deceived him, darkness

darkness hath blinded him. Darkness hath appeared to him as light, and seemed wonderfully to anoint his eyes, even beyond his brethren and fellow-creatures, and by this gawdy and glorious appearance hath blinded him and put out his eyes, so that now he is led away with darkness, as its captive, under the deceit of this vain appearance. Little doth he think 'tis thus, He thinks 'tis his weak brother that is blinded, and that cannot see the extent of his light and liberty in the Lord: but it is far from him so much as to imagine, that his weak brother doth see thus in the true light, and that he with his great light is blinded.

VER. 12. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his names sake, &c.*

There are three estates in this visible nature, which is a type or representation of that which is invisible, which are *childhood, youth, or the strength of manhood, and old or declining age*. Thus it is in *Christ*, There are *children*, there are *fathers*, and there are *young men*. Now to all these *John* writes; The same nature is in them all, the same spirit and course of life belongs to them all, yea they are all under the same yoke, and ought to be subject to the same commandment.

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his names sake.

The first thing which the soul seeks after in *Christ*, is the *forgiveness of sins*, forgiveness of God for *Christs* sake, *Christ* being worthy for whom God should do this thing. So soon as ever he is acquainted with, and interested in the name of *Christ*, this is the first use he makes of it, the first benefit he desires from it, namely, that it might be of power and prevalency with God for the pardon of his sins.

He whose eyes are opened to see the natural effects and danger of sin, all his thoughts are taken up either with desire after, or with delight in forgiveness. This it is about which his faith is exercised, and which draws forth his love both toward God, and Christ, and the brethren, viz. the sense of forgiveness. This is the first sweet voice of Christ to the wounded soul, *Son, thy sins are forgiven thee*, Little child, My Father hath forgiven thee for my sake. *Iohn* could not have spoke a more melting and pleasing word to little children, then to put them in mind of the forgiveness of their sins.

Now for this cause, saith *Iohn*, I write to you the Law and Commandment of life, which is love to the brethren, because the sense of forgiveness will make you ready to hearken, and quick and lively in the observation of it. The name of Christ, as it hath power with the Father to cause him to remit your sins; so it cannot but have power with you to make his Commandments, and his brethren and members, precious in your eyes.

VER. 13. *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*

Fathers, or old men, are men of knowledg, men of experience. (*I said, days should speak, and multitudes of yeers should teach wisdom, said Elihu*, Job. 32. 7.) *Fathers* in Christ are men grown in the knowledg of Christ, men that by much teaching, and much converse and experience, are become wel acquainted with Christ. They have known him that was from the beginning (who that is, see chap. 1. ver. 1.) They have seen, and felt, and tasted, and conversed so much with the word, that they are come very wel to know him. They know the nature of his life, they know the descent of it from the Father, they know the course of it in the world and in their own spirits:

spirits: yea they have walked so long with Christ and by his Spirit, that now they are come very wel to understand both him and his Spirit. And for this cause, saith *Iohn*, I write to you, because ye know him, and will readily espy the nature and vertue of his commandement, and naturally give up your selves unto it.

I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

Young men are such, in whom is the strength and vigor of life. *Children* have affections, and *Fathers* experience; but *Young men* have the strength. They are those who are fittest to fight, and aptest to overcome. The age and experience of fathers makes them somewhat unfit objects for Satans temptations, The weakness of children makes them also unfit for much fighting, so that the great stress of the battel lies upon the young men. Thus it is ordered by God: and as they have the pain, so they have the glory of the battel: They have this honour to be the great conquerers over Satan. While they were children, they were easily ensnared: (and this makes the sence of forgiveness alwaies so sweet in that state, because there is such a continual sight of the need thereof:) but now they are come up to the state of men, they are not so easily deceived with counterfeits and gawdy appearances, nor so weak in the faith as to be easily blinded and led away, but they stand stoutly upon their guard, and are able to give notable assaults to the Kingdom of darkness, and can get the better of it even in the worldly spirit, by the dexterity and power of that light and life which dwels within them, wherein now they are become strong and skilful. So that let Satan set upon them when he will, he comes off with the loss: for they are now so grown in strength, and have made such a progress in holiness, that Satan, with his wicked engines and devices, doth but help to advantage them and over-

throw himself. And for this cause, saith *Iohn*, I write unto you, because ye have overcome this wicked one; and so will disdain to permit your subtlet enemy to seduce and withdraw you from the Holy Commandment.

I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

Little children, though they are not experienced in knowledge, yet they are not without knowledge. They have the nature of the same light and knowledge in them, which is more grown in young men; and even perfected in fathers; inasmuch that they also know Christ; yea they likewise know the Father. They do not only know the forgiveness of their sins; and him for whose sake they are forgiven, but they know him too who forgives them. They are wise children (as little as they are) for they know their own Father; they know the Father of their Spirits; they know him who beget them and who naturally loves, and nurtures, and brings them up in Christ as his own children. They who are highest in false appearances and glories of light, have known neither Christ nor the Father: but the least child in the truth, hath known not only Christ, but the Father also. And for this cause saith *Iohn*, I write to you: This light, this knowledge will make you relish those things which are written to you in the same light. Ye who have known the Father, cannot but know Christ; and receive those commandments, whether old or new, which come from the Father in Christ.

VER. 14. *I have written unto you, Fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*

This is the cause why I do write, and why I have written unto you, Fathers, because ye have a knowledge in you which will light and lead you. Surely there is no drawing

drawing of you from that, which ye have had so long experience of. Therefore have I written, and do write with great confidence and assurance to you, who understand him who is the truth, and who will quickly discern, relish, and embrace what is of the truth.

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Ye are not only in the truth, but ye are settled and are become strong there. Life is grown up to its stature, to its maturity in you. And that which maketh you strong, abideth in you, so that there is no severing you, and your strength: Ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you. That which the devil prevails by, is by stealing away the seed of the word: but he cannot do it from you, for it is engrafted into you, and there it abides. Ye, ye have given a testimony of your strength, and of the abiding of the word in you, for ye have overcome him. He hath not been able to overcome the holiness and righteousness of your Spirits and new natures in Christ, but ye have been able to overcome the evil and wickedness of his snares and temptations. He cannot stand before the light of truth which dwells in you, and shines through you, but ye can stand before the fierceness and subtilty of all his assaults and baits. Ye, ye have overcome him, ye have fought it out, and have had the better. And therefore have I written unto you, because ye are strong, and able to fulfil the commandments, because the word abides in you, the light whereof can shew you that which sheweth to be the truth, because ye have had dealings with Satan, and false lights and spirits, and have overcome them, and therefore will be able to distinguish and ready to receive that which is the truth, and which will prove to the advantage of your spirits.

showed to ai (which end)

VER.

VER. 15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

This is the great hinderance in the course of spiritual life, which is the main thing which takes a mans spirit off from the true love, and from the love of the true things, viz. the love of the world, and of the things of the world. This will undo any of you, either children, fathers, or young men, if it prevail upon you: therefore I write to you all to beware of this; *Love not the World, &c.*

There are two things, wherein life lies, viz. in faith and love, to God through Christ: And in the contrary to these death lies, viz. in confidence and love to the nature and spirit of this world, both which flow from, and cherish, and are within one another.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

The world is this visible creation in its present state, over which universal corruption hath spread, and which God also hath universally accursed. *The things of the world* are the particular parcels of the creation. Or thus, *The world* (in its best, chiefest, and most bewitching part) is the spirit of his outward visible nature in its present estate. *The things of the world* are the several creatures, occurrences, relations and conditions therein, all which are answerable to this spirit: Whereof there are two sorts, namely, such as suit the bodily nature, and such as suit the mind. Thus all the waies of converse and traffique, with all sorts of accommodations, delicacies, honours, and pleasures of every kind, yea all the excellency of knowledge (I mean such as is any way suited to the nature of this spirit) is of the world.

Now

Now neither of these is he, that is born again, to love. He cannot love them in his spirit, he is not to allow himself the love of them in the flesh: but so far as his natural spirit runneth out after them, it is to be curbed and mortified by the life that liveth in him.

The most excellent things in this world are *the rudiments of nature*, and *the principles of art*: the *reason* and *philosophy* of nature, heightened by art according to the true line of nature. These are very rare, and of great excellency with the spirit of this world, but they are not so in the light and life of Christ, but very trash and dung: And it is utterly impossible for him who is born of Christ, and lives according to Christ, to know, own, or love these. He in whom the spirit of this world is slain, can he possibly relish or love those things which are only futable and sweet to that spirit? He that knows the loveliness of the nature of the things above, can he any longer love the nature of the things beneath, which stand in direct opposition to the nature of the things above? No, saith *John*, he cannot: *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

There is great reason that such as pretend to God, should crucifie their flesh in this respect: because the love of the world cannot stand with the love of the Father. If the Father hath sown his love in the heart, it will eat out, and destroy the love of the world there: If the love of the world be entertained in the heart, it will eat out the love of the Father. These are of a contrary nature, like *light and darkness*, and cannot live together, but that of them which prevails will expel the other.

The Father is the begetter of a new life, a new love in the heart: And this being begotten, abides in the heart, going forth toward Christ and the Father, and grows so powerful, that it drowns all other love, but what is comprehended and brought forth in this, which is not

any love to the world, but to the Father only: he therefore that loveth the world, cannot have this love in him.

The love of the Father teacheth hatred to this present world, even to the whole state of it in that nature, way, spirit, and course where in now it is. And as the love of the Father grows up in the soul, so the hatred of the world grows up in it also: for this love is still teaching the soul, more and more to hate the worldly principle, with all the food thereof: yea not only in strangers or neerer relations, but in his very self. Yea there the hatred is deepest and intensest, both against his bodily nature and the nature of his mind (which have been the stage and receptacle of lusts of several kinds, in all dispensations) with all the food and delights of either: Nay not only ordinary knowledg, but the very knowledg of Christ after the flesh is turned from by him, because it hath that in it which may feed the nature of that spirit, which the love of the Father doth slay.

Yet this is not so to be understood, as if it did contradict that Royal Law of love which comprehendeth all things. The love of the Father teacheth not to deny any righteousness, under any dispensation, whereof love is the sum, if not the whole. But this love of the Father, which bringeth forth hatred to the world, comprehendeth in that hatred true love. The other love, which appeareth so much, is not love: but he that thus hateth, only loveth aright. For as the Father doth, so doth he only estrange himself from the world in righteousness, and for the good of the world. This is none of that hatred, no such kind of hatred as the evil spirit produceth; but such as floweth from true love, and is comprehended within love, and leadeth unto love.

Nor is a man hereby taught to deny himself the necessary and convenient use of any thing in this world, either for

body or mind, (for the mind hath a life of nature continued to it, as well as the body; to which according to righteousness, there is a food due, as well as to the body.) Nay this engageth him to the use thereof, yea to the very seeking of those pleasures which the condition of his nature, and present estate requireth; which another person, who hath not this light or love in him, may from a dark principle refuse. And thus he that is conversant in the world, making use of the relations and pleasures therein, may under all this bear a true hatred to it; and he that withdraweth himself from it, appearing as its utter enemy, may in his heart still love it. Do not stumble at, but consider these things, O ye sons of men, to whom I still testify, that it is not for you by reading the Scriptures, praying, hearing, meditating, or any other way ye can take, to think to attain to any one strain of the true knowledge and life: but when God hath broken you in all the waies of your own inventions, yea and in the nature of your spirits, which is that which nourisheth your desire toward your inventions, he can both beget it in you, and lead you into it.

VER. 16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

This is the reason why those in whom is the love of the Father, cannot love the world, or the things of the world; because the world with all that is in it, *is not of the Father*, but of a spirit contrary unto and standing in opposition to the Father. All that is in the world cannot contribute anything towards that life which comes from the Father, and with the Father; nay it all tends to seek the nourishment of that life and spirit, which the Father seeks the destruction of.

All that is in the world, they are either *the lust of the flesh*, or *the lust of the eys*, or *the pride of life*. This is the substance of all, that the things of the world are in this their present state, they are incentives to these, they are food to these, they tend only to kindle and satisfy these: but they have nothing in them to feed or satisfy that life, which as it is from above, so it requires all its food and nourishment from thence.

1. *The lust of the flesh*. All that is in the world is but matter for the flesh to lust after, All there tends but to incite and feed the lust of the flesh; either the outward, or inward flesh; either the lust of the fleshly bodily nature, or the lust of the fleshly inward nature or mind. They reach, at highest, but to the feeding of the natural spirit, which is, like the rest of the world, involved in corruption, and engaged to maintain a life and pleasure contrary to the nature of him who formed it. Let the most ingenuous man that can be, suck what he can out of this world, he can feed but the ingenuity of his old nature, which very ingenuity is tainted and corrupt, and suck kind of food is there for it in the things of the world: So that thereby a man may kindle and accommodate in himself lusts according to his nature, but there is no food there for another nature.

2. *The lust of the eys*. The eye is the most capacious among the senses. When the devil attempted effectually to steal a temptation into Christ, he hoped to do it by the eye, presenting all the glory of the world thereto. The eye is the great receiver in of the pleasure of the world, and the world is very full of allurements and pleasures for the eye, either the eye of the bodily nature, or the eye of the natural understanding. All that is in the world suiteth these eys, and these eys alone; but there is nothing in them suitable to that eye which is from above; which, as they are thus, disdaineth to look back upon

upon them, but presseth forward toward its mark and object.

3. *The pride of life.* Man hath a natural desire to exalt his life: To make his life pleasant and glorious beyond the life of others. And this, the world doth abundantly furnish him with; for there is that in it which tendeth to feed and fatten the pride of every life. All the things of the world tend to make that kind of life, which any man is taken with proud. Let a mans vanity lye outwardly, or inwardly, the world will furnish him either way to swel and puff him up. Yea there was never any knowledge of God or Christ brought forth in the world, but (so far as the world could lay hold of it in the flesh) it did get it within its territories, keep it very charily, and make use of it to maintain and feed the pride of the life of the fleshly spirit. (Therefore a man must learn the knowledge of God and of Christ, otherwise then it is held forth in the world, or he shall be poysoned with it; and not saved by it.)

These are the three great properties of al that is in the world, They tickle and draw forth the lust of the flesh (They are flesh, and they feed flesh) They enter into and bewitch the eye, and they tend to exalt the present state of life in a proud and lustful way.

Now all these are *not of the Father*. The world indeed in its natural state and constitution is of the Father, but as now it is corrupted and become a bawd only to lust, so it is not of the Father. The Father doth not own it in this state, the Father doth not love it in this state. The Father cannot abide these lusts, nor that which cherisheth them, but seeketh the death both of it and them. *But of the world*, but of the nature, spirit, and stamp of the world. They have all the image and superscription of the worldly spirit upon them, of which they are, and in which they are, but they have nothing to do with the

Father. They are not of the principle of his life and spirit, but of the worldly life and spirit. There are three great principles, viz. *The principle of Corruption, The principle of civility and common honesty, The principle of devotion and religion*, all which with their food, their objects, their apparences and effects, is all that is to be seen in the world; but they are none of them of the father, but of the world.

VER. 17. *And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever.*

The world was not made to abide in this garment and garb, wherein it now appear: but *the fashion of this world passeth away*; and al the lust, which it now kindles and enflames, passeth away with it. Take away the world, and that which feeds upon it must needs dye. Take away the world, and the lust which springs from it, cannot continue. The world is a strumpet, and is to be burnt: and when she is burnt, her beauty will be destroyed, and there will remain no more takingness in her, no not to the flesh: And then all that lust wil be at an end, which hitherto hath abounded toward the world, especially considering that the same wrath and destruction shall also light on the spirit that lusted, which is the same with, yea and a part of the world.

All the *Corruption of the world* is to pass away from hence to the place for which it is prepared. Al the *Civility, Honesty, Righteousness, and common Love of the world* is to pass away. All the *Devotion, Religion, Faith, and Spiritual Love of the world* is to pass away. These are all to meet in one common principle, and into the fire with the world: So that he whose life is found in any of these, is of the world, and must partake with the world, he must pass away with it, be destroyed by the same fire, and

and be no more. This will be the end of *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, and of him whose spirit hath been fed or pleased therewith.

But there is an abiding thing, there is an abiding nature, an abiding principle; There are persons who are begotten and brought forth by God, who shall live and abide, when all these dye and pass away. And they are *Christ and his seed*, or persons that *do the will of God*, persons who have already passed that death which is to pass upon the world, persons who are not alive to the world, or to any of the lusts which are in the world, [and where- of the world consists, but to that will which destroyeth them, *Christ, being once dead dieth no more*, but abideth with the Father: and they that are once dead with Christ, dye no more neither, but abide with Christ and the Father for ever. This is the portion of those who are alive (not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit) to the will of God through Christ, who by a natural clue and teaching in their spirits, and not by any teachings of man from the letter, understand the steps of Christ, and know how to follow the track of the Fathers will, where- in the spirit of man, yea and of Saints too according to the flesh, would be lost every moment.

VER. 18. *Little children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.*

As there hath a spirit of enmity breathed against all the appearances of God from the beginning, so will it be unto the end. And surely it is meet that there should be darkness and death, opposite to light and life in every kind, and that they should oppose and fight with one another to the utmost. Thus the enmity of Satan, in en-
ry.

ry kind, hath its foundation in the wisdom, righteousness, and love of God.

Little children, it is the last time, &c.

The last time is to be the great time of deceit, and powerful opposition against the truth: *Antichrist*, the great deceiver, is therein to rise up and prevail mightily. *Little children* are aptest to be deceived. Those in whom the light is weakest, over them the powers and deceits of darkness have greatest advantage. Therefore *John* gives them warning especially, both of the many Antichrists, which were to precede, and of the great Antichrist which was to come at last.

God hath sundry waies revealed himself to *Adam*, to *mankind*, to the *Jews*, and to his own *Spiritual Seed*, (for as they are sown here in the earth, and brought forth in the light and life of various dispensations: so are they fain to suck that light and life through those dispensations,) but the last which he hath pitched upon, (wherein he will finish all the trials and exercises of the human spirit, and of his seed in the human spirit, is to do it by his Son. And as there have been enemies against all the former discoveries of God, proportioned to the nature; light and strength of those discoveries: so is there also against this last. This last enemy, or opposer, is called Antichrist; one that starteth up in stead of, and yet is against Christ, (for he containeth both these in his nature.) For where the Spirit of Christ faileth, or giveth way, in its true nature, life and vertue, there the spirit of Antichrist riseth up in stead of the Spirit of Christ, as if it were of Christ, and for Christ, but indeed is most bitterly against Christ, and only for himself; as is fully testified *2 Thessal. 2. 4. Who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is God, &c. so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, demonstrating himself to be God.* And as hitherto the oppositions against God,

God, (I mean those of this line, which arise from within) have been under a pretence of friendship, and of the true light of God : (For thus did the carnal seed the Jews) and the false Prophets among them, oppose both the true seed, yea and the true outward administrations of God.) So this is now to be acted over again, with more subtilty and power then ever. For as God hath reserved his strength for Christ, enduing his anointed with the might of his Spirit : so hath Satan also breathed a strong spirit into Antichrist, his anointed, who is his strength and first-born, and whom he also hath reserved for the last scene, as God hath his Christ. So that very strong is the appearance of Satan in the last time, and very great will be the deceit thereof.

And as ye have heard that Antichrist, &c. as ye have heard.

As it was foretold before, and as ye, who received the truth, have heard the testimony, even so it hastens on apace. There are many little Antichrists, many forerunners of this mighty spirit of deceit and enmity, on the stage already, on whose heels he himself wil tread. Christ foretold of many false Prophets and false Christs, and his Apostles after him foretold of the great false Prophet and false Christ, who was to deceive and bewitch, eating out the truth and life of this appearance of Christ by his Spirit in his Church, and setting up his own filthy Spirit and nature there, as if it were the pure and Holy Spirit and Nature of Christ, which he will maintain and prosper with, until Christ by a further appearance and power come to deal with him.

That Antichrist shall come. There is the seed of the evil and Antichristian spirit, and an earth proper to receive it, and the sowing of this seed in this earth, which at length springeth up and cometh forth to act its part of deceit and enmity against the truth.

And now are there many Antichrists. (1 John 2:18) Antichrist is the putrefaction of the spirit, not, at least, from thence he groweth. (The Seed of God sown in the heart of man, snatched up and transformed by Satan, and so sown again; this is the spawn of Antichrist, who in his full growth is *the man of sin*, having the power of all deceivableness and unrighteousness in him.) Antichristianism is the dead rotten carcase of the doctrine and life of Christ, filled with the spirit of Satan, and set up in opposition against the Spirit, Life, and Power of Christ. This in the head, or root of it, is THE ANTI-CHRIST, and the branches or members of it are several, or many *Antichrists*. For as there was the head of the new life in that one man, the anointed *Jesus*; and yet the same life in all the members is Christ also, and anointed there too: in which sense there may be said to be many Christs, though but one. (Every member of Christ is an whole Christ: He is a particular body himself, having all in himself: and yet he is also but a part of the whole Christ.) So also there is one great Antichrist, one capital Antichrist, and yet every one that hath any portion of the life and spirit of Antichrist in him, is also an Antichrist. All that taste of this new death, of this new enmity, of this new opposition thus sown, and thus springing up in them, are Antichrists. All that are born of this new seed and anointing of Satan, cannot but be Antichrists.

Whereby we know that it is the last time.

Christ and Antichrist were both reserved for the last scene of the world; and by the coming of each, those who know the times and seasons, know it to be the last scene. By the coming of Christ they know it to be the last age, and by the coming of Antichrist they know it to be the latter part of that age.

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VER. 19. *They went out from us.*

There was a visible body of beleivers brought forth, by the light and power of life, in that age. There was not only a shadowy Church and people held forth to the view of the world, but there was a true and abiding seed sown in this earth or garden of God. Here there were such as had fellowship with the Father and the Son, in whom was the truth, and who obeyed from the heart the True Commandment. God intending to give the world a taste of the truth, and to cause some light, life, and blessedness to dart, even among them from the truth, and to make way for that work which he had to do in the world, by the letting forth, entertainment, and corruption of this dispensation, sets up this *City on an Hill*, that it might be taken notice of by the World, be an honour to him in the world, and make way for that which was to follow.

Now therefore, answerable to this light, there was a mighty piece of darkness to spring forth and act its part. For which cause, there were persons to creep in among these with the old root of bitterness, whose nature and spirit was not changed at root, but only overborn (and so captived) by the present power and sweetness of life let down upon them, which afterward was to decay and corrupt, and become the vessel for the seed of Antichrist. And this was very necessary: for Antichrist cannot spring up out of the world, but out of the Church. Even the little Antichrists can spring only from thence: For the world in its greatest capacity of common wickedness, cannot bring forth Antichristianism, properly so called; but there must be a corrupting of the light and life of the Church, in which kind of corrupt minds the spirit is alone sown and bred. The spirit of the world

may make an whore, yea and is an harlot estranged from the Lord her Husband, but ~~not this~~ whore, which is the mother of all spiritual fornications and uncleannesses. For as *Israel* of old, *Apostate Israel*, was the great whore and adulteress under the time of the Law: So is the new *Spiritual-Apostate-Israel* the great whore, the great adulteress in the time of the Gospel.

They went out from us. Here is one great difference between the great Antichrist and the little Antichrists. The little Antichrists go out from the Church, the light and power of life, will not suffer them to abide there: but great Antichrist, or the Antichrist, springeth up in the Church, corrupting the Church, and every thing therein, and bringing them into subjection under the Law of the spirit of its corruption.

But they were not of us.

Though they went out from among us, as if they had been part of us; yet they were not so. They were not of our spirit, of our nature, of our life, of our root. At best, they could be but engrafted with us into one common root, which maketh them not thoroughly one with us: for our state there, is but an outward appearance (though a true one) our life lies lower and deeper. And that which is one with us there only, may either be broken off and separated from us, or depart and leave us of it self.

For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.

Duration is an absolute property of the eternal nature. The seed of eternal life is an abiding seed; that which unites here, separates no more. Those which are one in this or that dispensation, may become two again: but they which meet in the root and nature of this one spirit, can part no more. They which fell in with the light of the Gospel, and fellowship of the Saints, from a present

sent conviction, work, and power upon them, must needs sink again when that failed: but they that received the Gospel from an inward root, and were joyned to the Lord, and that body of Saints who in that age, were of the truth, could not leave either and go away into the common course of the world, or turn aside into any new track of the old corrupt spirit.

*But, that they might be made manifest, that they were not
al of us.*

This was the reason why God did lay snares to catch that deceitful spirit, that it might be discovered and made manifest what it was. God did hasten the fall of this fruit, that the nature of the root might appear in them, and they thereby be made known. God was very zealous of the honour of his Church in those daies, and therefore took many waies to discover that which was not of the truth. He was like an industrious husbandman, very busie about his garden, pruning of and casting out the corrupt branches and fruit, that their rottenness and corruption might appear, and not be a blemish, or of danger to them who were in the truth. In those daies, when light and life were opened, death and darkness were also opened, each continually gathering within their limits that which belonged unto them: But in these daies, wherein light and life is hid, death and corruption is also hid, and the spirit of error is no more made manifest, then the spirit of truth. There was light abroad then, which had great power of discovering things, both among the Saints, yea and to the world: but now life and death are both hid, and their discovery reserved for the great light of Christs fresh appearance.

VER. 20. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

I have written unto you, little children, concerning seducers from the truth, who are already come forth, and are to increase more and more, both in subtilty and strength: but ye have that within you, which teacheth you better then I can, whereby ye *so know all things*, as that no Antichrist whatsoever can deceive you in any thing. By this *unction* ye know what is the truth, and what is a lye; and can distinguish between those Spirits which are born of the truth, and bring forth the truth, and those which are born of a lye, and bring forth a lye under the appearance of truth. Indeed Antichrist was never intended to deceive those which are born of God, nor was he ever fitted for it: He is only to try them, but to seize upon that alone which is of the same kind of nature and principle with himself; and for this he is wonderfully well fitted, and strengthened. That which is of the flesh is food for him, and he may seek it out, hunt it, take hold of it, feed upon it, digest it, and bring it forth again in his own image and likeness: but that which is stronger then he (*greater is he that is in you, then he that is in the world*, chap. 4. v. 4.) that which is formed of the eternal nature, and is anointed with the eternal spirit, which abideth in it, quickening and teaching it, cannot be imposed upon or recovered back, no not by the greatest subtilty and strength of the enemy. It may perhaps receive some foils and bruises in the flesh (that is it which is to fall may fall by the hand of Antichrist, who may lead it captive into a strange land, even into *Babylon*, nay beyond *Babylon*;) but the seed of life, and the estate of its spirit still remain firm, and beyond the reach of all enemies. Yet Antichrist could not then prevail over
the

the truth; but, since Antichrist hath had power to prevail over the truth, to overcome it and lead it captive; but it is only over it in the flesh, and for the advantage of the truth, which by being thus overcome, and submitting unto death, shall overcome perfectly and for ever.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, &c.

There is an *oyl* or *ointment*, wherewith God anointeth his Son, and the Spirits of those who are begotten and born of the same nature with him.

This *oyl*, or this *ointment*, is the *Spirit of the Lord*, which God hath given to Christ, and which Christ hath given to his in the dispensation of the Gospel, according to the nature and Law of that dispensation, but more especially (and after another way and manner) to those who are new-begotten and born of him in his own nature and Spirit.

And it is called *oyl* or *ointment*, because it doth diffuse it self and work in the spirit, after the manner that oyls or piments do in the body. It dissolves and melts into the spirit, adding relief and quickness to the new nature, and expelling that which is contrary to it. Indeed all that is done in the regenerated soul, is done by this oil or ointment: and all that the regenerated soul needs, or can need, is but the further presence, application, diffusion, and various efficacies and effects of this oil. For by this means the soul comes to be, and know, and do every thing: not by any motions of its own, but by the droppings and insinuations of this oil into it. So that all the Spirit and excellency of the new nature lies in the properties of this oil or ointment, which I may by no means pass over without the mention of some few of them.

1. It is the *Oyl of Salvation*, the *Oyl of Healing*. There is no biting of the venomous Serpent, nor no wound

wound which God himself makes, but the application of this oyl will mitigate and heal. And this may be one great reason of the wounds which God makes in every creation, and in every dispensation and estate of life, namely to shew the vertue of this oyl in that dispensation, yea and to point at a vertue far beyond. What a grievous wound did *Adam* receive? And yet *Christ* healed him by this *Oyl*. How many grievous wounds did that people of the *Jews* receive? And yet the anointing still raised them up *Saviours*, and they were saved by the anointing, and *because of the anointing*. Yea in the New Testament there was a sweet outward type (besides all the sweet inward effects and representations of it, which there did abound) when the sick were anointed with oyl by the Elders of the Church in the name of the Lord. And what a full and perfect healing and salvation this ointment shall produce at last, the Lord only knows: but certainly the fulness of its nature, and the largeness of its extent is not yet discovered. But they who have received it, cannot but find it at present very pretious, and powerful in asswaging all inflammations and pains, purging out all that is putrid and corrupt, and bringing the new nature into a right, proper, sweet, and settled temper in the spirit.

2. It is *the Oyl of Light*. It teacheth all things, it leads into all truth. There is nothing of God but it knows, and every thing of God it imparts, proportionably to the state and need of that spirit wherein is the new nature. And this it doth by anointing, (*anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou maist see,*) which both prepareth the part to be instructed, to receive this light, and also letteth in this light into it, so that it springs up in it as its own. It doth not hold out light outwardly, but light springs up from this oyl in the nature of the spirit: so that this light is but as it were it self, and the growth of its own nature.

Thus

Thus it teacheth the ear to hear, and thus it teacheth the eye to see; and after this manner it instructeth the heart to understand.

3. It is *the Oyl of Life*. It conveys life and quickness into every thing that is anointed with it. *He that believeth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of Living Water.* As it is a Living Oyl, so it anoints with life: As it is spirit, so it anoints with spirit: Yea it is an inward oyl, an inward ointment, it anoints within the heart, and within the belly, and anoints plentifully, insomuch as rivers of life spring forth from him who is anointed with it. It anoints with the Fountain of life, so that hee that is thoroughly and fully anointed, is able to issue out streams, yea rivers of life. It is impossible to imagin what abundance of life flows out in every motion from him that is anointed. He need not fear the danger of any Law, or sin, or death; for this life is above all Laws, and comprehends them in greater perfection, then is possible for them to be required or brought forth under any dispensation.

4. It is *the Oyl of Love*. This Spirit is the Spirit of Love; This ointment is full of it. O it is unspeakable, in any degree, to utter the love of this anointing! The nature of this love, the extent of this love, the current and course of this love, man, in any dispensation, cannot learn. It is a pure love, a large love, a full love, a free love; it is not at all measured from anything without, but springs and flows from and according to its own nature. Nay let me speak freely, It doth not so much love God from any apprehensions received in concerning him (with which mans love is bounded in every dispensation) but from its own nature, and from that knowledg, sight, and feeling of God which it hath within it self. It loves God because of the anointing; The love of God, wherewith it loves him, is in the anointing.

ting: and by the spreading of the anointing in its nature, this love spreads and shoots up in its nature. And thus it loves all things else, and knows the right place of hatred, and how it is comprehended, brought forth, acted, and concluded in love. This is love indeed.

5. (And lastly) It is the Oyl of Joy, the Oyl of Gladness, even of Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, the Oyl of everlasting Freshness and Mirth. The joy of that dispensation of the Gospel was but a shadow, and yet they by vertue of that anointing might *rejoyce alwayes in the Lord*: but that beautiful flower was but an image, and it died; it soon faded, and the glory thereof quickly passed away. But this is true joy, this is full joy, this is abiding joy, this is the joy of the Nature of God, which abideth in it self, and in every one that is anointed therewith: for this anointing, as it feedeth with *Salvation, Light, Life and Love*; so with the *Truth and fullness of joy for evermore*. This was Christs Crown, and this is to be set on the head of every one who is born, brought forth, and perfected by Christ, not according to the Law of any dispensation, but according to the Law of his own nature, and of the measure of truth in the Father.

Now this Oyl or Ointment, both those which are truly begotten in any dispensation, and those which are begotten in the eternal nature, have from the Holy One, abiding and living in the one according to the Law of that dispensation, and abiding and living in the other according to the Law of the eternal nature. *But ye have an anction from the Holy One.*

Christ is the Holy One of God. There is none Holy but the Lord, and he Christ, in whom the Lord himself, with all his Holiness is. And from him is the anointing. He receiveth of the Father, and he distributeth it abroad, according to the nature and pleasure of his own and the

Fathers

Fathers will, There is an anointing likewise from the unholy one: There is an ointment from the spirit of Antichrist (for as Christ is anointed in his way, suitable to his nature; so Antichrist in the contrary way: And as Christ is the head and vessel of the true anointing, so Antichrist of the false.) Indeed Antichrist were no body, if he had not an anointing. The spirit of deceit could not be strong in deceit or spiritual power, had he not his oyl or ointment. Without doubt there is a false appearance of salvation, of light, of life, of love, of joy, peace, rest, sweetness, meekness, &c. all which spring from the false anointing, as the truth of all these doth from the true. But ye have received your anointing, not from this spirit which is unholy and dark at root, and is only holy in appearance, but from the truly Holy One.

And ye know all things. As your light is pure, so your light is full, springing up abundantly in you, and making known every truth on the one hand, and every deceit on the other. Indeed there is no deceiving of any, no nor of those who are only anointed in a dispensation, while the anointing abideth on them and hath power with them.

VER. 21. *I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth: but because ye know it, and that no lye is of the truth.*

It is exceeding natural, pleasant, and profitable for light to open it self into the bosome of light. It is natural to open the truth to them in whom it already is, and in whom there is a desire and capacity to receive it; and this dispensing, and current of it from one spirit unto another, yeildeth delight and profit on both hands. That counsell of Christs, *Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,* hath a foundation in

every nature: for every nature abhorreth to prostitute its excellency to those natures which are below it, and can only despise and abuse it. There is indeed a speaking of the spirit of life to the spirit of this world, partly to gather that which is not of this world out of it, and partly to try what the spirit of the world may be brought to, and partly also to be a testimony against it. The middlemost of these hath been alwaies very toilsome and burthenfome, whereof the Spirit of Christ in his Prophets and Ministers hath alwaies complained, and in every dispensation hath been grieved, tired out, and faine to give over. But, saith *John*, I write not unto you upon these terms, I write not unto you because ye have not an anointing to instruct you in the truth, and to warn you of the deceits of this present age, but because ye have it, and by it know what the truth is. This makes it sweet to me, and this will make it safe and advantagious to you: by this means the light of my Spirit will flow into your spirits, and become of service to you, which bestowed upon others would be wholly lost.

But because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

Ye know the root of truth, ye know the nature of truth, ye know the doctrine of truth, and the practise of truth: and ye know that no lye, how specious soever, can be the truth, or come from the truth. No man on Earth, or Angel from Heaven, can allure you one jot from that doctrine of life, which ye have received from, and know in the anointing. Others are not able to distinguish between the truth and a lye, and therefore a gawdy wel-dressed lye would take with them, before the mean, plain and naked truth. When a lye appears, they are not able to judge between the nature and the appearance, nor to search into the root, and so are apt to slight the truth, and magnify the lye: and to what end is it to write to them to avoid a lye, who are so ready to be taken with it,

x, nay whose very nature falls in with it?) therefore I write not to them, but to you, unto whom my ministry upon this account cannot but prove efficacious.

VER. 22. *Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*

Jesus, the Saviour, is the great truth of God, he whom God hath anointed with himself, and from whom all the substance, sweetness and life of the anointing floweth. Now he that denies him to be the Saviour, to be the only Anointed One, and so points out any other way or hope of life, he is a notable liar in deed. He that denies his person, he that denies his doctrine, he that denies any of his commandments, under pretence of being advanced to an higher life, is a liar. He that undervalues or undermines that appearance of Christ in the flesh, and so sets up somewhat else as more excellent, he is *the liar*. Indeed he that opposeth truth in any kind, though it be but truth in a shadow, he is no less then a liar, but he that opposeth the substance of truth, the only Word of God, denying the nature of this anointing, and setting up the nature and guidance of another, he may well go for *the liar* among them, who by virtue of the true light, see the nature and course of his spirit in the mystery of darkness.

The same is the Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.

The very spirit and work of Antichrist runs against the Father and the Son, against the original nature of life in the Father, and against his bringing of it forth in the Son, and by him in the world. And thus he fights, he sets up another original of life, another way of life, and denies both this original and way. He grants a Father-hood, he grants a Son-ship, he grants an Anointing, yea he en-

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deavours to set up all these, but they are not the truth, but to eat out the truth. There is the image, the Spirit, the life, the nature of the Father and the Son in every truth, this Antichrist fights against and strives to eat out by his lye. The great doer of this, with all manner of strength and subtilty, is the Antichrist; but he that doth it in any degree, is an Antichrist.

Now the same is the Antichrist. The same liar that denies Jesus to be the Christ, is the Antichrist that denies the Father, the Son.

VER. 23. *Whoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.*

The Father and the Son are one. They have the same nature, the same spirit, the same life, the same being. The Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, and all that each have is in one another. So that know one, know both; receive one, receive both; live in one, live in both. The Father is received in and with and through the Son, so that the Son comes first to be seen and acknowledged, though in him there is secretly wrapped up the Father also, and he likewise is then also seen, though perhaps not so distinctly as to be so fully acknowledged. But within a while he also comes sensibly to be distinguished, by Christs manifestation of him to the soul; and then the soul comes to have communion of life both with the Father and the Son. And now, as it was Christs work to preach the Father, and direct the Spirit to the Father, so it is the Fathers work to preach Christ, to direct the Spirit to the Son for all the life and enjoyment it would have even of the Father. Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to a true faith in Christ. The Father reacheth to go to Christ, and to abide in Christ, and to acknowledge Christ in all. He therefore

therefore that denies the Son, he hath not the Father. Now whether a man doth this directly or indirectly, it comes all to one: for both waies he fights against the nature and life of Christ, and discovers the contrariety and enmity of his own spirit. There is a vein of spirit running along through the whole doctrine of the Gospel and the practise thereof, which that Spirit that any way clanneth against (whether as an open enemy, or as a friend, either in a low legal way, or in an high spiritual way) manifesteth thereby that he is not of the truth, which knoweth the nature and use of these things, and the Law of its subjection unto them. This then is the sum.

Antichrist is the liar, the great liar, that denies the Father and the Son. He denies them both in denying Jesus to be the Christ. He denieth Jesus to be the Christ by corrupting the doctrine which he gave forth, and filling that corrupted carcass with a contrary anointing. And this is the most natural and certain way of undermining Christ that can be: for as the soul fel in union and fellowship with the Father and the Son by the light of this doctrine (as was affirmed ch. x. v. 3.) so this union and fellowship must needs fall and come to nothing, as this doctrine is corrupted; and where a contrary anointing taketh place.

VER. 24. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning: if that which ye have heard from the beginning, shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

Because there are so many liars come forth, and coming forth into the world, therefore looke ye to your selves, looke to your light, keep close to that promise of life and salvation which ye received at first. Let no man, under what specious pretence so ever appear and soever take away your

your light from you. Sel not that truth upon any term, which ye have already bought. Be not by any means drawn out of love with the Doctrine and Commandments of Christ, but know the excellency of their nature, and let them abide in you. Cherish them with the same love, with the same delight wherewith ye at first received them.

And by this means ye shall continue in the Son, and in the Father, who else will spue you out. It was by this doctrine that they came to have place in you, and that they gave you place in themselves: and therefore if they find that, by any means cast out or stolen from you, they also will estrange themselves, and ye shall continue no longer in them. No sooner is there a rent made between the truth and you, but there must also needs be a rent made between the Son and the Father and you, who have given you admittance into their rook and fellowship by the truth, and for the truths sake. If ye part with the true light, he who is the fountain of that light can no longer afford you place in himself. So that ye have great cause to look to your footing, and station in the word which ye heard from the beginning.

In that great dispensation of the Gospel by Christ and his Apostles, there were four sorts to be found.

1. There were those that sel in deceitfully, for their own by and corrupt ends, to satisfy the lust of the flesh or of the mind, some way or other, by their pretence of seeking after, and subjection unto the truth. Of this sort was *Simon Magus*. These were direct down right hypocrites, who were quickly discovered and shaken off.

2. There were such as were wrought upon by the beams of truth, through the ingenuity of their own natures, harkening unto, receiving, and improving the light held forth by Christ and his ministers. Of this sort were those *Jews*, who, when they heare Christ preach,

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were much affected and convinced even to belief, but Christ knew their hearts, he knew the root and nature of this faith, and would not commit himself to it.

3. There were those who were brought forth by the light and power of that dispensation, who were gathered out of the world, converted unto God, instated in the truth of the Gospel, and in the Son and the Father through the truth. These were in the truth of the Gospel state, as the *Jews* were in the truth of the law state. Of these did the body of beleivers chiefly consist, on whom the Spirit of the Lord did intend to make most of his experiments afterward, as he formerly had done on the *Jews*.

4. There were those in whom the true nature and seed of life was sown, who by the vertue and power hereof continued in the truth and efficacy of that dispensation, who hereby comprehending that outward visible state, wherein they with others were brought forth, were able to maintain themselves therein, and to keep up the life of it. Now by this comprehension and abiding in the truth, they were distinguished from the others, who were apt ever and anon to be betrayed, seduced, and fall away. Hence it is that abiding, continuing in the truth even unto the end, is so pressed by Christ and his Apostles, because this alone is the publick testimony of the true nature and spirit of life, which only is to inherit. The truth is that which distinguishes persons and states, who belongs to God, who enjoys God, who is in God. So that he that falleth off from the truth loseth this testimony, and all the sweetness, communion, light, joy, life, and peace, which he had from God through the truth; (though he may have somewhat else in stead thereof, which to his vain spirit may seem more taking:) he that continues in the truth, hath still the testimony with him, and the enjoyment of the Father and Son in the truth. So

saith this same Apostle in ver. 9. of Epist. 2. *Whoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*

VER. 25. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, Eternal Life.*

There is no trifling in this matter, we run the race for no mean prize, the crown for which we contend is very weighty, it is no less then *Eternal Life*, which God hath promised to them that overcome, and abide in the nature and spirit of truth.

There are two very great benefits of abiding. One is the free and sweet enjoyment of God and Christ, through the Spirit, in the present state. The other is the attaining of the crown of the inheritance of life at last. This is the mark at which this new nature, in this its course doth aim: it careth not for any thing in this world, but only for a passage through it, and looks for its content and satisfaction at last, which is only to have its fill of that life which it hath already tasted: And this God hath promised, and cannot but perform unto it, continuing in the truth of that nature, spirit, and doctrine which entitleth it thereunto. God hath sent forth his Son, by this doctrine to bring men to life, even to eternal life, to a life that abideth in and with God, and passeth not away as the lives in and by dispensations do: and to those who embrace and continue in this doctrine, he hath promised it. The spirit of the world must dye, and live no more: it must not taste or enjoy the sweetness of the nature and life of God, but be banished from his presence for ever: but that spirit which is born of the truth, grafted into the truth, and abideth in the truth, shall live the life of Christ, shall lead eternally with God and with Christ an eternal life.

VER.

VER. 26. *These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you.*

The great design of seducers is about you: for if they can but overcome you, then they carry all afore them. They may easily overcome and spread their deceits in the world, if they once delude you: for in you alone is that light and that life and that power which can withstand them. As the great work of the Spirit of Christ, when he comes forth, is against the spirit of this world, and the strong holds thereof: so the great design of the spirit of Satan and Antichrist, is against those in whom the Spirit and life of the truth of Christ resides. He knows he can never advance his lye to purpose, while the truth in you keeps its footing, and stands ready to out-face him. Therefore have I wruten these things to you to quicken you to look to your standing, to keep close to the truth, and to beware of those seducers, who would fain foist into your spirits their lies in stead of the truth, which they will use all the art they have to bereave you of.

VER. 27. *But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you: and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide therein.*

I have written to you concerning seducers, putting you in mind of the great power of deceit wherewith they come forth, and that their great design is upon you, as also that if they prevail, they rob you of your crown, even of that eternal life which the Father and Son hath promised you. But ye have a better instructor and fore-warner than I, even the spirit of truth, unto whom all

deceits are known, who abideth in you, and who hath taught and will still teach you to abide in the truth.

But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you.

From Christ ye have received the spirit. Him hath Christ given you from the Father, to be the oyl of life and salvation unto you, to live in that seed of truth which Christ hath sown in your spirits, and to enlighten, quicken, preserve, and nourish your spirits up to eternal life. And while this spirit abideth and hath power in you, the other spirit cannot prevail to impose upon you. Darkness cannot take possession of that spirit which is filled with light.

And it doth *abide in you*. The true nature doth not drive away the Holy Anointing of God, nor doth the Holy Spirit of God depart from the true nature; but he delights to live and act and speak there; and the true nature delights to have it so. That which hath a nature and will of its own, will sooner or later, one way or other seek its satisfaction, and drive away the Spirit of Christ: but he that is crucified with Christ, there is no offence in him to the Nature and Spirit of Christ: so that the Spirit of the Dove may safely descend upon him, and rest in him, and abide with him.

And ye need not that any man teach you.

The spirit, or anointing, is the great teacher, and he teacheth fully; he teacheth perfectly. There is no need of any other teacher, where he himself setteth up his own office of teaching in the soul. All the *Prophets*, all the *Apostles*, all the *men of God* spake but from the spirit, and therefore their words must needs fall short of the immediate speakings of the spirit himself. He that hath not the spirit, he hath great need of light from abroad: but hee that hath the fountain of light within him dilating it self, he hath no need of light from without. This is the glor-

ous state which is one day to be set up, when no man shall say to another, *Know the Lord*; but all that are born of God shall be filled with the light from within themselves; and drink of the waters of their own cistern. There was a sweet taste and representation hereof given out in those days, which was thoroughly true in some, but only true in part in that state; according to the dispensation of the spirit either in gifts; or in his own nature.

But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things.

The anointing is the universal teacher of those spirits that are begotten in the truth, or he that teacheth them universally, who in the midst of all the varieties of his teachings is still the same. It is the same Sun of righteousness, the same Fountain of life and light, that lets forth such variety of beams upon your spirits.

Teacheth you of all things. He doth not teach them some one thing, or some few things from within, and send them to seek abroad for the rest; but he teaches them all things. He leads them into all truth and righteousness, and out of all vanity, deceit, and unrighteousness. There is nothing either of light or darkness, to be known by them in whom the anointing is, but the anointing teacheth it them. And yet this doth not make them despise any outward teachings, but the light within maketh them rely, and drink down with pleasure the light from without. Wisdom within, justifies wisdom without, in all its goings forth. He that hath received the spirit, will also receive any thing that floweth from the spirit any where else. Hence it was that the injunctions and commandments of Christ by his Apostles (even according to the letter) had most power with them who were fullest of the anointing.

And is truth, and is no lie.

The spirit in his greatest variety of appearances and

teachings, is still truth; and teacheth truth; nor doth he know, or can teach a lie in stead thereof. There is a lie, a lying spirit, a lying teacher, whom maketh a lie like unto the truth, and teacheth it in stead of the truth; but this spirit is not so, but in every thing he appeareth and speaketh in you, is truth, and no lie.

There is no truth but there is a lie answerable to it: and there is no lie but there is a truth proportionably. There is no light nor life of any kind, but there is a darkness and death of a kind contrary to it. If there be a true anointing, a true spirit, a true oyl which bringeth forth true life and salvation, there is also a lying spirit, a false anointing, a filthy oyl, which bringeth forth a lying life and salvation; a false believing, with a false peace, rest, joy, &c.

But this which ye have received, is **Truth**: That which Christ gave out to the true seed, yea to that state of Discipleship in that age, was the true anointing. And there was no question of it at first; but when the counterfeit appeared, then it was hard to distinguish the truth, the counterfeit clothing and adorning it self so accurately, that it might appear as the truth, and cast a slur upon that which was indeed the truth, as if it were a lie. It pleased the Lord to let the truth be stripped of all but its own nature, and to let the lie have all the glory and rakingness. But yet the truth is the truth, and no lie: and a lie is a lie, and not the truth. And that which ye have received, and which is your light and teacher, is the truth: and the other, which would allure you from the Doctrine and Commandment of Christ, is not the truth.

And even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide therein.

This anointing, this teacher abiding in you, will prevail. As ye received him with the truth, so he will keep you in the truth. He hath taught you to abide in that

that which ye heard from the beginning: and he is present with you, still to enlighten and persuade your spirits to abide there. And as he hath taught you, so ye shall abide. I know ye cannot but hearken to him, who hath power with the nature of your spirits, to preserve and fix them (in the truth) against all the deceits of the contrary spirit.

VER. 28: *And now, little children, abide therein, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

Ye have a sufficient teacher abiding within you, one who will sufficiently instruct and press you to abide in the truth, so that ye shall abide therein: And yet it is also necessary that there be a co-incident care of your spirits with his teachings. Ye must give up your selves to abiding, ye must watch against the policy and power of the anointing of the enemy. Yea, and it becometh me, who am a Minister of Christs toward you, to warn and press you in this respect also. (It is very observable, that John should so immediately before confess to them that they had no need of any teacher, but the anointing they had received: and yet so suddenly after (even in the very same breath as it were) pursue his counsel of abiding, with so weighty a consideration at the heels thereof.)

And now, little children, abide therein.

Since ye have so great advantage over the enemy, look to your station, and let him not overcome you. *Little children*; Ye are children though little: ye have the true life in you, ye are in the true path of happiness, ye have the true guide to lead you along in the clue of truth, unto the life & happiness set before you: Hearken to your teacher, keep close to the truth which ye have received, and be not by any means cheated of it, or removed from it.

That

That when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Christ is hid, Christ is gone. He appeareth not, he is not here, but is risen, and ascended from hence into Heaven, sitting there at the right hand of his Father, untill his foes be made his footstool, upon whom he wil tread, and by whom hee will make his new ascent into his Throne.

But as really and certainly as he is now hid and gone, will he appear, and come again to take an especial account of that light which he bestowed upon his Church, and from them darted forth upon the world.

Now at his appearance and coming, some will have confidence, and some shame. Those in whom is the truth, who have lived in the truth, who have grown in the truth, the truth will make them confident. But those who have made, or received, or set up a lie in stead of the truth, though they have held it out stoutly till now, yet now the light Christ bringeth with him, thoroughly discovering them even unto themselves, will make them ashamed. He that hath lost his pearl, triffled away the truth, is destitute of the true light, of the true anointing, and in stead thereof is found with a lie, (with a lying nature, with a lying spirit, with a lying doctrine) how will he be ashamed when Christ shall come with the measure and reward of truth! Therefore look to your selves, and hearken to that teacher who is faithful to you, and will never advise you to let go the truth, but will still perswade and instruct you to abide therein.

VER. 29. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righte ousness is born of him.*

Righteousness is a property and effect of the Nature of God. As there is no ie holy as the Lord, so there is none righteous

righteous as he neither. He is the Fountain and Substance of all righteousness, yea and every image and shadow of righteousness (in every dispensation) hath sprung from him also, and lived by his presence alone in it. The *Angels* lived, *Adam* lived, the *Jews* lived, the *Disciples* of Christ lived in righteousness, while they abode in this root: but so soon as ever they were seduced and withdrawn from it, that life, with that image of holiness and righteousness which God had formed in them, immediately gave up the ghost.

He that knoweth God, knoweth that he is righteous. Amidst all the corruptions that abound in every fallen nature, the Nature of God remains Holy and Pure. Amidst all the unrighteous actions and designs in every state, God remains righteous in all his designs and actions, yea and in sustaining that spirit which is the Fountain of unrighteousness. His nature is such a bar, having such a contrariety and power in it against all unrighteousness, that it is utterly impossible for any kind thereof, either to spring up within him, or to break in upon him from without. They that have ever tasted any thing, in truth, of the Nature of God in themselves, let them tel me if any evil or iniquity (so much as in their own spirits) can come neer it. It can, and doth daily purge out the defilement of their natures, but the defilement of their natures can by no means reach it.

And he that doth righteousness, must needs be born of him. He can have no less then his nature breathed into him, and springing up in him. The nature of all flesh is corrupt, and hath corrupted its waies before the Lord, and cannot bring forth righteousness, no not in the image or shadow, until the image or shadow be renewed in them. He therefore that bringeth forth righteousness, so much as in a dispensation, must needs be born of God in that dispensation: But

he that doth righteousness in truth, in substance, must needs be born of God in the truth and substance of his own nature, which is the only root thereof. And if ye know that God is righteous, if ye know righteousness according to the line of his nature, ye cannot but know that there is no other way to the performing of it, but by being born of him. Christ and his Seed alone, who have their Nature and Birth from God, are the only doers of righteousness; and by their doing of righteousness, it is made manifest that they are born of God.

CHAP

C H A P. III.

VER. I.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew not him.



His is the great dignity, which God hath bestowed on them who receive the truth, and beleeve on his name through his Son, that they also should be called Sons. And this is not a bare titular honour, but hath a real foundation in God and in them. It ariseth from the love of God unto them, and it strongly argues the greatness and richness of that love. What can the love of God do more for them, then bring them into so neer and intimate a relation, union, and communion with himself for the present, and so full an hope for the future? God so loved them, even in this poor, weak, dark, dead, sinful estate, as to breath into them his own nature, and to beget them again in the life and vertue of his own quickening spirit. And what manner of love is this! Surely a very strange love, such as no nature but his is acquainted with. He that knows what God is, what it is to live in God, what it is to be saved by God, what that crown is that hangs at the end of salvation, he knows what it is to be called a Son, he knows what it is to be pronounced by God to have the same nature, the same life in him whereof God himself is, and to be nurtured up to the same inheritance which God him-

self now possesseth : (for that love that makes him a Son, carries with it every thing that is proper for a Son.) This is a wonderful love indeed , that drowns the perfection of shame, sin and misery ; in the perfection and fulness of honour, holiness, and happiness.

Behold what manner of love, &c. Ye who have eyes, look upon it, and admire it. The love of the creature, were it purified, brightened, enlarged, and made to appear like it self, would discover a great excellency, and do great things : but yet all the appearances and motions of the creature, would still be bounded in their own creaturely line and nature. But what is this love, of what nature is this love, after what manner doth it work ! It enters into the poor defiled heart, which is not fit for any converse or delight of any thing that is pure, and there it sows the Holy Nature of God, taking the soul into communion therewith, making it a Son, and causing it to grow up in and with this nature unto eternal life : It is it to the heir of death and misery, *come out of the land of darkness, and be the heir of my nature, life, and blessedness* : This is the nature and language of the kind and loving heart of the Father. All sweet effects flow from love : Love is the root of all sweetness in every nature : Love pitieth, love relieveth, love healeth, love uniteth and embraceth, love quickeneth and enlargeth, love abundantly and universally bestoweth : (There is no harm but good will in love, even to that which is most unlovely.) But this is the sweetest of all effects that can possibly be produced, *to call us Sons* ; yea it is the womb of all sweet effects, what manner of love therefore doth it proceed from and signify ?

Therefore the world knoweth him not, because it knew not him.

Here is the ground of all that mystery which we are to the world. They know us not, they know not our nature,

ture, they know not our life, they know not the blessedness to which the Father is leading us, because they know not him nor his love, from and according to which, all this issueth. If they had known him from whom we came, they would likewise have known us who came from him: but not knowing that nature which begets, they cannot know that nature which is begotten.

And this is the foundation of all persecution, from persons any way ingenuously zealous, namely their ignorance: *if they had known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.* Christ and his Seed have always been unknown to the world, misrepresented to them, and misunderstood and hated by them: which ariseth not so much from the want of cleareness, of light in the Seed of Christ in this their present state, as from the worlds darkness and ignorance of that God, for whom they seem to fight. *They shall put you out of the Synagogues: yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth Gods service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me,* Joh. 16. 2, 3. Persecutors are (generally) persons that pretend to know, and upon their knowledge of God, and zeal for him, ground their persecutions; but the true ground is their ignorance, and it is well for them that it is so.

Because it knew not him. If it had known him, it could not but have known us: for that light which discovereth him, discovereth us also. But that knowledg, which they set up for the knowledg of him, not being the truth; how can they have a true knowledg of us, who are from him in the truth?

VER. 2. *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.*

Beloved. Great is the love of God to those whom he calls his Sons; He hath accepted them in the beloved one, and loved them with the same love wherewith he loveth himself and his Christ. Great is the love of Christ to them, who hath bestowed all that he hath received of, and from the Father, upon them, and loveth it in them. Great is the love of the Apostles and Ministers of Christ to them, whose Epistle, Crown, and Glory they are in God through Christ. Great also is their love, among themselves, one unto another. So that every way, and every where within the bounds and territories of this life, they are beloved.

Now are we the Sons of God. This is our present state, we have the Nature of God now in us, we are heirs already, all the priviledges and consequences of Sonship do now appertain to us. We have union with the Father, reconciliation and peace with the Father, the tender care and protection of the Father, free access to the Throne of the Father, yea the very Spirit of the Father, to be with us and abide in us, to guard, guide, and assist us in every thing. It is not a barren relation, but a full relation even at present, which all the sweetnesses and enjoyments, which the very spirit of this worldly nature can tast in the things of the world, can in no wise parallel.

And it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

We have received much already, but there is much more behind, which maketh no appearance to the world, no nor to our selves. As God is hid, and Christ is hid:

so our life, our crown, our glory, our inheritance is hid likewise, and doth not appear any more then they : for *our life is hid with Christ in God*. The world knoweth not what we now are, and we our selves know not what we shall be. God, who hath opened many things to us, hath hid this from us : nor indeed are we capable of it in this present state. It is too strong, and we too weak ; it too large, and we too narrow. Our hearts cannot conceive, nor our eyes behold the Majesty and brightnesse of this glory.

But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.

Though it doth not appear what we shall be, and so we cannot distinctly know it, yet we know it in general. As we have the Nature of Christ in us, so we know that we shall wear the very same crown with him. God hath set up Christ for the pattern, and he will shew his skill in making us as like him as can be ; and when he bringeth us forth, he will bring us forth in his likeness. The great design of God is to bring forth himself in us through Christ, to cast us into a sleep until he hath perfectly formed us, and then to awaken us in his own likeness. He will take away all vails from himself, and all vails from us, and we shall appear in our own naked natures and spirits, as like one another as can be. And this we know, we know by the light and work of God in our spirits, that he is doing of such a thing, and will not fail or effecting it, and at his appearance it shall be made manifest.

For we shall see him as he is. This is a plain evidence that we shall be like him. There is no seeing of God, but with such an eye as his, there is no understanding him, but with such an heart. There is no beholding of God, but in the light of God ; and there is no seeing in his light, but with his eye. He that looks him in the face, must himself have just such a face as his is. But this wee shall

shall do, this he hath promised (and his nature could not be satisfied without performing it to us) that we shall view and enjoy his own naked beauty and glory. We shall see him and enjoy him, not as he hath appeared in the various lights of his several dispensations to the creature, but as he is in himself, as he is in the light of his own nature and being, which is utterly impossible for us to do, unless we be very like him.

VER. 3. *And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

God is pure, he is the Holy One, who is perfectly pure himself, and can perfectly purify all things; but no uncleanness can touch his nature. And he that hopeth to be like God, he that hopeth to see God as he is, he that hath the true nature of hope in him, springing up from a true foundation, he presseth after the purity of God, making use of all that vertue which he finds in any of the dispensations of God, toward the cleansing of his spirit and waies from all pollutions. He that hath hope of seeing and enjoying the fulness of the purity of God hereafter, cannot but desire, and endeavour as much as is possible, the spreading of it more and more over him here.

Every thing in the new nature inflameth the spirit toward purity, and helpeth to purify. The light thereof purifieth; the life thereof purifieth; the joy, peace, rest, and motions thereof purifie. Faith purifieth, Love purifieth, and hope purifieth. As every thing in the old nature defileth: So every thing here cleanseth. So that it is impossible for a man to have this hope in him, and to love corruption either in the secrecy of his own spirit, or in the outwardness of any of his waies. Therefore that hope, which maketh a man bold and presumptuous in trading

trading with that which is evil and forbidden, is not of the true stamp, hath not the nature of the true hope in it.

VER. 4. *Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law.*

God will justify the Law, and make it honourable. The Law is a true shadow of his nature, of the separation of it from all uncleanness and unrighteousness. God, by higher dispensations and discoveries of his nature; may swallow it up, but not contradict and destroy it. The life of Christ, though it freeth from the Law, yet it teacheth not to transgress, but to fulfil the Law. This is the path which Christ went before his Disciples in, wherein he commanded them to follow him, and to teach it every where as his will and pleasure. Therefore it is a strong argument with all that know the Nature, Spirit, and Life of Christ, against any practise whatsoever, when any that are in the same light with themselves, testifie unto them that it is a breach of the Law: for they know it to be the pleasure of the Nature and Spirit of Christ, to bring forth and fulfil the righteousness of the Law in them. *Rom. 8. 4.*

Sin is the transgression of the Law.

Sin of every kind, is a transgression of the Law of that kind to which it appertaineth. There is the Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, the Law of Christ, or the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, the transgression of any whereof is sin. And they that are taken into the dispensation of the Gospel by Christ, their sin is a more abundant transgression: for in sinning they transgress not only the Law of their own nature and spirit, but also the Law of the human nature, whereto the spirit of this human nature is to be subject; until it be enlightened and brought forth in the power of that life, which owns and

fulfils the Law more abundantly. So that by no means can they do any thing in their spirits against the Law, (no nor in their flesh, so far as it is mortified) but only for and according to the Law. The Law was a friend to them, even formerly, in all its severity against them: and they, after they are freed from the Law, are friends to the Law, and servants to all the righteouneits that is therein contained.

VER. 5. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin.*

The life came into the world, and was manifested in the world to take away sin. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* God reserved this Holy Nature for the purifying and cleansing of those vessels, which through their weakness should contract corruption. And the appearance, and manifestation of God in Christ doth expel, and drive away sin. Sin is immediately dislodged where Christ, with the light and power of God, entrencheth. And when once he shall fully appear in the soul, as he hath promised to do at his second coming, sin will be perfectly driven out.

He was manifested to take away our sins.

The great design of God, in that appearance of himself through Christ in the flesh, was to redeem his people from sin, to interpose with his goodness, love, mercy, and power between them and their sins; and for this cause did he call that arm of his salvation, wherein he appeared, *Jesus: for he shal save his people from their sins.* He washeth away iniquity from them, he turneth their hearts (yea the very nature of their spirits) against iniquity, writing therein the Law of his Holy Life and Nature in stead of the Law of sin; yea and he letteth out strength and power upon them, increasing it daily more
and

and more in them , to overcome all sorts of tempters with all their temptations , and all the inclinations of their own flesh unto iniquity.

And this, ye who are of God , ye who are in the light, ye who have the spirit, know: ye know that no transgression of the Law can any way stand with the nature and life of God , or with that vertue that floweth from him through Christ. Ye know that this is against the end of that manifestation , and would make it an empty and vain thing. And so the wise God , in the great design of his wiidom , would become weak and unsolid.

And in him is no sin, which ye know also. He is that Fountain of purity which is contrary unto sin , and which is to wash and cleanse from sin , but there is no iniquity or sin in him. He is that spring of power which opposeth the power of sin and Satan , but there is no power in him unto sin , but only against sin. He that gave out the Holy Law of righteousness unto the creature , hath the originality of it in his own nature, which fighteth more strongly with the originality of sin , then the Law can with any of the sprouts of it. Christ doth not come here into the world to declare and fight against sin , and then return back into an higher light , to give it place and embrace it there in his own bosome ; but by entering into the fulness of light , he becomes its more perfect and strong enemy, carrying on more vigorously that work and battel in the fulness of light and power , which he began here in true light and power. Therefore he that by any light , or high apprehension of things learneth to transgreis , is not like him.

VER. 6. *Who sever abideth in him, sinneth not: who-
sever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known
him.*

There is a separation between the Nature of God and the nature of sin, insomuch as he that is in the one cannot bring forth fruits unto the other. He that is of sin cannot enter into life, or if he be assisted to do so in this or that dispensation; yet he cannot abide there, but so soon as that assistance leaves him, he falls off from the truth: and he that is of God cannot enter into sin, but most naturally escheweth and avoideth it.

Sin naturally flies this root, and this root naturally casts out sin and the sinner. He that doth evil hateth the light and runs from it, nor can the holy and pure nature of light endure to dwell with that which is defiled. If the love of God cause him to go forth toward sinners, and to meet and embrace them in a dispensation of life, yet when he findeth sin to root it self a new there, and begin to live again, he immediately (even notwithstanding, and in the midst of all his love) spueeth them out. The Nature of God can never become one with the sinner, until it hath separated the nature of sin from the sinner.

Whoever abideth in him, sinneth not.

God is the Holy Root, into which nothing but that which is holy can be engrafted, and from whence it can suck nothing but holiness. He therefore that is planted there, that abides there, that lives and moves there, cannot be a friend to sin, or give way to any of the practices thereof. Indeed sin may break in upon him, yet it may break forth through him, because of the weakness and corruption which yet hangs about his flesh, but what is forced upon him against his mind and will, by the subtilty and strength of the enemy, is not his own choice
and

and act, but belongeth to that root from whence it came, and which the blood of Christ immediately cleanseth his Spirit from. He that sinneth against his desire, meerly by the deceit and force of another, is no sinner in Gods account, is not such an one to whom sin is imputed, but immediately expiated by sacrifice. Or thus, He that is transplanted into Christ, and abideth in God through him, is transplanted into and abideth in a new root, where sin hath no place. From his new nature in him sin cannot spring, and that estate and being, which he hath in the flesh, is passed away and is no more. That being, that state is no being, no state: the other is his only being and state. And though weaknesses may hang about him in the flesh, yet they cannot reach him in his spirit, they issue only from that which is his enemy, and so according to righteousness cannot be attributed unto him. *It is no more I*, saith the Apostle, *but sin that dwelleth in me.* I am new-made, I am a new spirit, My new nature and being is my only nature and being, which sinneth not: but yet there is also sin disturbing me in this fleshly state, which ariseth from the nature and root of sin, and not from that which is now my nature and root.

Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him.

The presence of God, the light of God, the knowledge of God expelleth the nature and appearance of sin. Sin can only lurk or appear in the dark, but hath no place in him into whom God enters, and whom he takes into himself. If therefore sin please a man, he is not acquainted with God. He may think that he hath a very great light, and that he hath seen the life of God, and known his nature and the waies of his spirit; but the truth is he hath not: for then would he be a great enemy to that in his nature which is contrary to God. So that that sight, that knowledg which he hath of God, is not

the truth, and he hath neither seen nor known him. His eye hath never seen, nor his heart ever understood the nature of that life, but God and he are very great strangers. If he had ever seen God, he would have seen otherwise, if he had ever known God, he would have known otherwise then to please or give way to sin in any thing. By, therefore, this his communion with and giving way to darkness, he plainly discovereth the constant estrangement of his spirit from the true nature of light.

V E R. 7. 8. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous.

He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning: for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

My babes in Christ be not cozened. Be strong in the light and power of the truth, above all the deceit and strength of the enemy. Let no man be able to infuse wrong apprehensions into you, and so withdraw you from the love and practise of the truth: but know that righteousness is of God; and he that doth righteousness, is of a righteous nature, as God is. He that bringeth forth the same fruit with God, hath also the same root. God could not perform righteousness, unless his nature were righteous: and he that doth righteousness as God doth, his nature also must needs be righteous.

Sin and the sinner is not from God but from Satan, who is an enemy unto, and an accuser of the righteousness of God. He that doth unrighteousness, he that sinneth, cannot be of God, but of a nature contrary to God, even of that evil nature which the devil begetteth, and cherisheth in him either in its own plain appearance, or under the shadow of truth and righteousness. He that doth

doth that which is unholy and unclean, is of the root, which is unholy and unclean, and not of the Holy and righteous Nature of God.

The devil was a transgressor from the beginning, from his very first constitution and bringing forth, he abode not in the truth, but warped from it: and ever since he hath been compleating that sin, and propogating it so far as he could. And he that sinneth is of him, his nature is poisoned with the seed which he hath sown, and continually stealeth into every dispensation of God.

Now the Son of God was manifested, the light of God did appear in Christ the Son of his own begetting, not to put a gloss upon sin, but to destroy it, not to give it place again by the change of a notion, but to cause it to pass away from his Redeemed Ones for ever. Therefore let no man delude you, and in a circle bring you back again to sin, for that can never be, unless ye be divorced from Christ and made one with Satan. If Christ be in you and ye be in Christ, he will by his light and power carry on his great work in you, which is to destroy sin in you, and perfectly divorce you from Satan. Christ will not fail of accomplishing that for which he was manifested by and in the light of God, which is to *destroy the work of the devil.*

The great works of the devil are to bring sin and misery upon the creation, to corrupt every dispensation of life, and bring all under it into the same condemnation with himself: to breath the spawn of his unrighteousness into, and so corrupt the nature of them which God any way maketh righteous, and so to cause sin to spring up in them, and perfect it self unto death. Now Christ came with his light to undermine Satan, to redeem the captive natures and spirits of the sons of men, to cleanse all his pollutions out of the vessels into which his light and spirit enters. And he that is of Christ, he that is of God will
give

give himself up to this destruction and dissolution of sin, never seeking the salvation or rescue of it, nor have the least desire in him of ever having to do with it any more. And *little children* if ye be otherwise perswaded, and by any means drawn into a friendliness and giving way to sin, assure your selves ye are but deluded, and drawn into that course which is contrary to the manifestation of the light of God in Christ.

VER. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

Whosoever is begotten and born of God, whosoever springeth from the pure Fountain of life and holiness that is in him, he doth not form sin in his spirit, or bring it forth in his life and motions. The spirit of Satan and of the world, with that which is born of them sinneth; but that which is born of the Spirit of God, sinneth not.

The Seed of God, of which he forms his children, is pure: and it is a leaven which leavens their natural spirits, purging out the old leaven, and making them a new lump in their spirits. This leaven thrusts out sin, taking possession of its habitation, so that sin cannot be, nor live, nor act, where it abideth. Therefore this remaining in those that are born of God, they do not sin.

Nay they *cannot sin, because they are born of God*. This birth puts them out of the capacity of sinning: for the Nature and Seed of God destroys the nature and seed of sin, before any can be born of him. It is impossible for a sinner to be born of God, but he that is born of him is holy and must abide holy. Sin may assault him, and make forcible breaches upon him, because of the weakness of his spirit in its present state, but it can never get within or come forth from the nature of his spirit any more. Indeed he that is born of God in any dispensation either of
Law

Law or Gospel, is freed from sin, and should sin no more, but he that is born of God in the nature and life of his own spirit, can sin no more, because he is thus born. The birth from God is as real as ever the birth from sin and Satan was, and doth as really exclude unrighteousness, as ever that did righteousness.

VER. 10 *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

There are two properties in Satan and all his seed, *unrighteousness* and *hatred*. There are likewise two properties in all the Sons of God, *righteousness* and *love*. They are of a righteous, and also of a sweet loving spirit and frame. That spirit which Satan hath breathed into man, is full of unrighteousness, frowns and bitterness.

Now according to this temper and these properties, do each bring forth fruits, The seed of Satan bring forth only unrighteousness and hatred (*miser and destruction are in all their ways*) the children of God bring forth only righteousness and love. Their Spirit, like Christs, breaths after the salvation of those that give themselves up to destroy. They can easily do good to any, but harm to none; no unrighteousness or hatred from others, can incline them to retort unrighteousness or hatred, but only stirreth up their love, by which at length, in Christ and with Christ, they shall sweetly overcome.

Now these fruits make them manifest in the light (for in the dark nothing can be manifest.) By these fruits the nature of Spirits and their roots is discovered. He that doth righteousness and loveth his brother, is hereby manifested to be of God, from whom alone this is to be learned. He that doth not righteousness, and loveth not

his brother, plainly manifesteth that he is not of God, in that he hath not learned nor knoweth how to repeat those lessons, which he teacheth every one that is born of him.

VER. 11. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

Christ, who came with the light of the Gospel, brought tidings, and these were his tidings, *love*. He came from God with a message, and his message was *love*. Hatred had hitherto prevailed in the dark, but he came with that light which would beget and command love. And this was the sum of his message, that beleevers should enter into the light and love of the Father, should receive the light and love of the Father into themselves, and should bring forth the fruits of love in light. Now because the Father and Christ are hid, and the life and nature of them is only visible in the Saints, therefore are they to give up themselves to the love of one another, and to manifest what their love is to the Father and Christ, by their tenderness and sweetness toward the life in one another. By this the world will be condemned, because though they speak great words of their love to God and Christ, yet they alwaies persecute the appearance of them in the Saints: and by this, through Christ, will they be justified, because the life in them, hath taught their spirits to fulfil the Law of love to the Saints, and to the world. And this *message*, as Christ brought it with him, so it was preached from the very first. The Angels sung it, and Christ came to set a pattern of it, and was very careful to principle and instruct his Disciples, that as he loved them, even as the Father had loved him, even so should they also love one another, even as he had loved them.

VER.

VER. 12. *Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, and slew his brother.*

Cain was *Abels* brother, and doubtless had a natural affection to him. But this affection was poisoned by the evil seed which was infused into *Cains* spirit by the *Serpent*. He was of the wicked one and slew his brother. He was begotten again of Satan, and born in the enmity of Satan, or he could never have so transgressed the Law of his own nature. The wicked one, the fountain and head of all wickedness, Satan, slew his brother *Adam*, whom God had formed in his own image: and he begat *Cain* in his own likeness, and taught him to slay his brother *Abel*, whom God had formed in the image of Christ unto life by the promise. Now the message is not that ye should love with such a kind of life as is or may be thus poisoned, but with such a love as can conquer the poisoning and enmity of Satan, and maintain its own nature and operations pure.

And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brothers righteous.

Cain slew *Abel* who was his brother, but why? Did he hate him as he was his brother? No surely, the very light and manuduction of his nature could not but teach him thus to love him. But his brother was born again, born of the promise, and offered up new fruit to God, even the services of faith, which were very pleasing in the eye of God: but *Cain* came with his old nature, with his old principle, and so with old services which God loathed, and testified unto him his detestation thereof, and his acceptance of *Abels*. Now upon this account that *Abels* works were so good and pleasing to God, and his own so evil and displeasing, therefore did he slay him. This was the true ground of the first persecution,

and the same is still the ground of all the persecutions ever since, what ever the subtle spirit of man, under its vain forms of religion, may pretend to the contrary.

VER. 13. *Marvel not, my brethren; if the world hate you.*

When a mans spirit is full of love and sweetness toward others, avoiding all manner of harm and injuriousness toward them, and doing them all the good he can, he is apt to wonder why they should hate him: but this is a measuring of things according to his own present frame, and not from a sight of the estate of things in the true light. The ground and necessity of the worlds hatred, is so evident in the nature of things, that there is no cause of marvel therein. They are of a root and nature contrary to you, and ye are of a root and nature most contrary to them, which is the foundation of the greatest antipathy that can be, so that ye naturally seek one anothers lives, according to your natures and principles: ye theirs in love, they yours in hatred. Was it not so from the beginning? Did not *Cain* hate *Abel*? Righteous *Abel*? Innocent, and in-offensive *Abel*? The neereft propinquity of blood, or the greatest sweetness and in-offensiveness (which was beyond all exceptions in *Christ*) cannot allay this hatred; but so long as the roots remain, the fruits wil rem in. As long as the root of love remains in the one, he will be bringing forth love toward that which he loves: and as long as hatred remains in the other, he will be bringing forth hatred toward that which he hates. Therefore wonder not at the worlds hatred, because ye are so full of love; but open your eyes in the light, and observe the ground whereupon it hath been, and stil is, and then ye will easily see how necessary and unavoidable it is.

VER.

VER. 14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*

The world hateth the Nature and Life of Christ. The life of Christ in his present appearance, is only lovely to the eye of the spirit. There is a seed of enmity sown by Satan in the spirit of the world, whereby it is made irreconcilable to the Nature and Life of Christ. Therefore by bringing forth fruits of love, by having the seed of love sown, and springing up in us toward the brethren; we know that we cannot be in that state of death which cannot yield this fruit, but are passed into that life which is the root and spring of it. He that doth righteousness, is righteous; He that loveth, is of love, hath the seed of life in him, and by vertue of that principle of life, and by the light which God hath held out unto him, hath passed out of the estate of death into the estate of life.

He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.

He that hath not love in him, hath not life in him, but is still dead. Notwithstanding the great light of the Gospel which hath shone, and his seeming to receive and grow abundantly in that light, and to be advanced much above others in the understanding and life of the spirit, yet he is but dead. He hath not known the Nature, the Spirit, the Life of Christ, for all these are love, flow forth in love, and teach love. So that he that loveth not, manifesteth concerning himself to all that are in the light, that he is not yet removed one jot out of that state of death, from which he seems so effectually and abundantly translated, but still abideth therein.

VER. 15. *Whoſeuer hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

The devil is a deſtroyer, and he that hath the ſeed of his enmity in him, is a deſtroyer with him. All his ſeed ſeek the deſtruction of that image of righteouſneſs, which is formed and brought forth in the nature of Chriſt. And if they fail of effecting its death and ruin, it is not for want of will, but for want of ſkil and ſtrength. If it ſhine forth in any veſſel or inſtrument, they ſeek the enſnaring of that inſtrument within their Laws, and if they cannot reach it there, they many times fall upon it with fury and violence, although thereby they intrench upon the bounds of their own ſafety, by tranſgreſſing and violating thoſe limits, whoſe preſervation is their own defence.

Now murder is the groſſeſt, the worſt of evils. True light, true life purgeth out ſin from its ſecret corners, and will not ſuffer the moſt refined ſtrains of iniquity. The nature of life will ſuffer no evil to dwell in it. He therefore that hath a murderous heart toward his brother, toward the life of Chriſt in his brother, cannot have the life of Chriſt abiding in him. The life of eternity in the ſpirit, cannot poſſibly conſiſt with a murderous ſpirit, but immediately deſtroyeth that frame and temper in the ſpirit: He therefore that hath this ſpirit of hatred and murder in him, cannot have eternal life abiding in him, but muſt needs have loſt the taſt thereof, if ever he had any.

VER.

VER. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down lives for the brethren.*

Life is the most precious and pleasant thing that is, but death the most dismal and bitter. The one is the darling, beauty and glory of every nature, the other its reproach shame and confusion. Every nature, loves life, every nature most naturally eschews and abhors death.

As the life of God is more excellent, so his sense and hatred of death is more eminent and vigorous, and his love to life more abundant. He loveth that root of life, from which the creation sprang, (which lived in him, and in which he lived) more then the nature of the creature could any of the fruits thereof.

Yet so great was the love of God to his creature, that finding it in the snares of death, he parted with his own life and entred into its death, that he might become its redeemer. He gave his Son his own life, that it might become a sacrifice for the life of the world. He prepared his Son a body, for the reception and death of his own life.

And by this means, we who are in the light, and know what God hath done for us, which in its own nature could not but be so contrary to him, perceive how great his love unto us was. *God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, &c.* Had not his love been very great and immeasurable, it could never have ascended this step. He would not have tasted the bitterness of the death of his own life in his Son, upon a smal consideration, but only from the compassion of the power of his love toward us lost ones, whom his soul could not endure to behold perishing.

And if the same love be in us, it will teach us the same lesson.

lesson. It will teach us to lay down any life we enjoy, though never so sweet for the brethrens sake. Not only the life of a comfort or pleasure, but the life of our very natures, yea the life of our Spirits. *Blas me out of the book of life*, saith Moses: *I could wish my self accursed from Christ*, saith Paul, which was no hyperbolical extravagancy, but the natural working of love enlarged and heightened.

VER. 17. *But who so hath this worlds good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

The things of this world, which are suited to the necessity, relief, ease and pleasure of this nature, they are the good of this world. *Who will shew us any good?* Nay they are not so only to the judgment of sense, which is depraved, but in their proper nature and tendency.

The brethren, they who are born of God, and by their new birth are near a kin in Christ, they also while they are in this earthly state, here in the body, have need of the good things of this world: yet God hath so pleased to order it, that many times they much want the supply thereof. The world is usually very hard to them, but their mutual life and love in the spirit, makes them very free one to another in the things of the flesh.

But he that is of strained bowels, who can have the good things of the world, and see his Brother stand in want thereof, and yet not supply him, where is his love? If love doth so enlarge the heart, that it will cause it to make havock of all things, even of life it self, for the good of the Brethren, what kind of love is his to God and the Brethren, whose bowels can with-hold such trivial matters, and let his Brother suffer through the want of them? Such a Person may perhaps boast of love, of
his

his dwelling in love, and love in him, but after what manner doth it dwell? *how dwells the love of God in him?*

VER. 18. *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but indeed and in truth.*

There is an appearance of love, and there is a reality of love. Every one will commend love, and pretend to love, they cannot for their heart but commend the appearance, and pretend unto it, but most are enemies to the nature of it. Love is active, it delights in motion, and to have its waies speak its vertue and efficacy. God speaks out his love to us by what he hath done for us. And my little ones, let us thus love. Let us not make great professions of love one to another, but upon all occasions in every kind, let us be ready to do what love calls for. If we have the real nature of love in us, then let us love according to that nature, and not strive to make a shew of it beyond what is in our hearts.

VER. 19. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

By our love, by the reality of our love, by the activity and readines of our love to perform any service for the brethren, not only to the parting with some of our goods, but to the very laying down of our lives for them, by this we know that we are true-born, that we are of the true root and nature of life, which alone can bear this fruit. This temper and disposition is begotten from above, is formed of the seed of truth which God sows in the Spirit; he therefore that hath it in truth, must needs be formed of the true seed, and may hereby discern and know that he is so.

And by this means shall we be able to stand in the pre-

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lence of God with free and undaunted spirits, whether we approach unto him now, or shall hereafter appear before him. Knowing that we are of God in the truth, and by the power of his life and nature in us, have walked in the path which he hath chalked out unto us, our hearts will reioyce and justify us even before him, through that life and vertue which he hath begotten and brought forth in us. If we are of God, we know that the light of God cannot condemn that which he hath formed, quickened, and acted in us, and so we are not startled but confirmed before him. And how can it possibly be otherwise? He that hath the Nature of God, and hath lived the life of God through the Spirit in the flesh, even that life of love which God hath quickened and draw'n forth in him, how can his heart but remain assured before the fountain of that love from which it spring?

It is no smal matter to be able to assure or perswade the heart before God. Now it is very easy for men to beleeeve and think wel of themselves: but when they come into his presence, and the true and searching light is made manifest, whose spirit will not fail and shrink before his eyes? Surely his alone who is of the truth, and hath loved in the truth. His heart shall not fear that light which itself is the copy of, and which it hath answered, and brought forth (according to the power of life) in the truth.

VER. 20. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater then our heart, and knoweth all things.

The light that is in God, is cleerer and greater then that light of his which shines in our hearts. By that light of his, we who are truly taken thereinto have knowledg, and do attain to the sight and understanding of the misteries

ries of God and of Christ : but yet we do not know all things, the things we know are but few in comparison of the things we know not ; and what we do know we know but only in part. But God knoweth fully, God knoweth all things, his eye searcheth into the secrecy of every spirit, yea into those things in a mans spirit which are perfectly hid from his spirit. Now if we by the weak and refracted light of God in us, can see matter of accusation and condemnation in our hearts, under that dispensation of life wherein God hath placed us, notwithstanding all the gracious allowances thereof, how shall we stand before the immediate, original, and entire Light of God?

VER. 21. *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

The Lord wil by no means spare the guilty. He that is a sinner under any dispensation, against the Law of the life thereof, engageth God against him, and looseth the benefit of the grace of that dispensation. And that light which God hath held forth in the dispensation, doth not encourage but affright his spirit, and make him afraid of the presence of God. But he that is justified within, he whose heart in the true light of God cleers him before God ; he can come boldly into the presence of God, and suck that life and sweetness from him which that dispensation yeilds, and was appointed to convey. He fears not condemnation at last, for the true light of God in his own heart now justifieth him, and the light which is in God will be able to justify him much more ; nor doth he fear to draw nigh to God in any of his ordinances or waies of communication, or the missing of any sweetness from him.

VER. 22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

There is a wondrous free communion and intercourse between God and the soul, in the dispensation of life through the Gospel. What-ever God desires from the soul, he hath freely; and what-ever the soul desires of God, it hath freely. *He that asketh, receive he. Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* The soul can desire nothing in true light, nothing in the true way of life, but God giveth it into his hands. The nature of the child can ask nothing but what the nature of the father delighteth to give, so that the nature of the father can withhold nothing from the child which it asks.

And this is that which maketh the father so bountiful to the child, viz. its child-like nature; because it naturally delighteth to please and fulfil his will. It is written in the volume of Gods book concerning this child, *Let me come to do thy will, O God*. And when God brings him forth in any dispensation, either of Law or Gospel, he applies himself with his whole soul, to the pleasure of God in that dispensation. He keeps every commandment, he doth every thing that may please him, and nothing that may displease him. Now because the nature and pleasure of the father is so dear to the child, therefore is the nature and pleasure of the child so dear to the father, insomuch as he cannot refrain from bestowing upon him what-ever he asks of him.

God heareth not sinners, but if any man do his wil, him he heareth. He that seeketh not the wil of God, but his own wil and advantage in his obedience, his spirit and course God regardeth not. But he that hath the heart of God, and loveth the will of God where-ever it appears, though

in never so low and legal a shadow, applying himself with the strength and delight of his whole soul to the observation thereof, all the desires of his heart are precious with God, and still attract from him what ever they issue forth after.

VER. 23. *And this is his commandement, that we should beleeve on the name of his son Iesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandement.*

This is that which God hath commanded the nature of man, *viz.* to quit its own hold, to cease from its own labours, not to rely upon any thing it is or can do, but to cast it self upon his Son, whom he holdeth forth to it in the Gospel; To receive a principle of light and life from him, and therein and thereby to live alone unto him. To live by the faith and in the love which he lets into the heart. To bring forth no more of the old unbelier and harred, but all from henceforth of the new faith and love. To love the life in the root and pattern thereof, and to love the shootings forth of it in all the branches, yea and the least shadow of it in the creatures. To stir up no more the wisdom and strength of the flesh for any service, but to give it self up to the pain of every cross, which the light and power of faith doth not releve it from; and to make use no more of the enmity and weapons of the flesh, either for self-preservation or revenge, but to suffer what ever it cannot tecure it self from or conquer by love. This is the substance of his commandement, that this should be done by us according as he hath commanded, even in truth and uprightneis of spirit, and by the naked power of his spirit and life in us, and not according to the suble deceitful undertakings and appearances of the flesh.

VER. 24. *And he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

God hath given forth commandments to the nature and spirit of man, which he taketh into union and communion with himself, in and through the dispensation of life in the Gospel. And he who keepeth his commandments, tasteth the vertue of this union, and the sweetness of this communion: yea it is by the vertue alone of Gods dwelling in him, and of his spirits dwelling in God, that he is in any wise, able, to keep the commandments. He therefore that observeth the commandments of God and of Christ, plainly discovereth their presence with him, and the presence of his spirit with them. He is the Temple wherein God dwelleth, and God is the Temple wherein he dwelleth, or else he could never bring forth the nature and purity of the will and commandments of God in his life and motions.

And the abiding of God in us, we know by the gift of the spirit remaining with us. By feeling the spirit in our spirits, by finding it teaching, warning and quickening us, casting light about us and dispelling darkness, being ready to help us against all manner of evil, and unto every manner of good; by the abiding of this in us, and by its converse with us we know, that God (in whom this spirit is, and from whom it cannot be separated) abideth in us.

C H A P. I V.

VER. I.

Beloved, beleeve not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.



THE great advantage of every kind of life, consisteth in its communion with that which is of the same nature, spirit, and life with it self, and its separation from that which is of a principle contrary unto it. Now there is light created in every nature, whereby it is to search and discern what is agreeable and friendly to its nature, and what is different and contrary. So that the safety and comfort of every nature lieth, in making use of this light to discover what is futable and good for it, that it may embrace and communicate with it, and what is unfutable and evil, that it may turn from it.

Beloved, beleeve not every spirit.

He that beleeveth every spirit, will soon embrace a lye. The child which is taught of God, knoweth how to chuse the good and refuse the evil. Faith is not given a man for to entertain every thing therewith, but only to fasten upon and let in the truth in light.

But try the spirits whether they are of God.

The Lord hath set up a ballance, in every spirit which he hath formed in any dispensation of his, by which it is to weigh every thing, and thereby to know and
judg

judg whether it be of God or no. Is any thing in dispute : Bring it to the touch-stone, bring it to the light, and that will discover what it is : (for light discovereth both light and darknes.) That will discover whether it be indeed of God, or whether only it pretend to be of God, for the better advantaging of its deceit.

Now the light which searcheth, tryeth and discovereth things, hath these three properties. (And of this most especial care should be had, for if a mans light and balance be not right, how shall he rightly weigh or discern things?)

1. *It is that which God hath deciphered, and given forth in the letter.*

2. *It is that which God hath sown in the nature of a mans spirit.*

3. *It is that which God alone can open and manage, and which he alone doth open and manage by his own spirit.*

If the light by which a man trieth and judgeth, be not the same with that which God hath revealed in the letter of the Scriptures : or if it be the same, yet if it be not sown in the nature of his spirit, as well as in the Scriptures : or if it be sown by God in his spirit, yet if it be not afresh enlightened, drawn forth, and managed by the Spirit of God dwelling in him ; I say, if all these do not meet together, a man is apt to err in judging, and so consequently to beleave and receive a lye in stead of the truth.

Upon the first of these, all the world (or man in general) fall short, because they know not the letter. They know not the nature or language of that truth, which God hath revealed in the letter, and so are in no wise able to judg concerning the revealed truths of God, either under that dispensation of the Law, or that of the Gospel.

Upon the second, the Jews and many Christians fell short:

short: For the Jews, though they had recourse to the Law and to the Testimony, yet having not the nature of that thing in them which the Law and Testimony spake concerning, they were not able to judg aright, but judged falshood to be the truth, and the truth to be falshood. And such Disciples who had only the letter of the Gospel in their understandings and affections, and not the nature of the Gospel in their spirits, they also judg amiss concerning Christ and the Spirit, and are easily led aside by them, who come forth with an unexpected strength and subtilty of wickedness to deceive.

Upon the third, every beleever must needs mistake, when he ventureth in the strength of his light and judgment to determine about the nature of spirits or truths, without the immediate illumination and assistance of the spirit. For the spirit was not given to be a stander by or spectator, or to be had recourse to in extraordinary cases, but to be made use of in every undertaking and motion, without which it must needs be defective. That prayer which is not in the spirit, that exercise or operation of faith and love which is not in the spirit, and so that tryal and decison of any thing which is not in the spirit, but only according to the light which the spirit of man gathereth from the letter, is not right in the line of Christianity, nor tendeth not to true understanding and righteousness, but to vanity, deceit, and error.

Because many false Prophets are gone out into the world.

Ther's abundance of deceit abroad. Many false prophets, and every one of them furnished with many false appearances of the truth. The spirit of Satan, which was so baffled by the powerful appearance of Christ, was soon sown again, and is already springing up, and he hath abundance of vessels and instruments which he filleth with his counterfet Wares: therefore, beloved, ye had need be circumspect, that ye entertain not his ministers

and their false doctrines, in stead of the ministers and
 truths of Christ. Therefore rouse up your selves, awa-
 ken your senses, keep close to the doctrine and spirit ye
 have received, and by them try every spirit that appear-
 eth, whether it be of God or no, that so ye may under-
 standingly and safely either embrace it, or turn from it.
 For a Disciple is not to turn from any thing that is of
 God, nor to entertain any thing that is false and delu-
 sive: therefore he is to try both spirits and doctrines, and
 to stand at a distance, keeping himself indifferent, nor
 inclining one way or the other, until his search and dis-
 covery of them be manifest in the light. For a Disciple is
 not to receive any truth of Gods, until it be manifest to
 him as truth, nor to reject any lye of Satan or his instru-
 ments, until it be manifest to him as a lye. So far as he
 truly discerneth light or darkness, he is to esteem them,
 and to unite or separate from them: but wherein he seeth
 not, he is to be silent, even in his very spirit, and not
 to hasten a prejudgment in the flesh; but to wait for the
 manifestation of the light of God in the spirit.

VER. 2. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every Spirit
 that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is
 of God.*

The great work of God hath been to manifest Christ
 in the flesh, by whose light and power he breaketh the
 powers of death and destruction in the heart, and brings
 forth life and salvation. All the light of the Law did tes-
 tify concerning him, and fore-speak his life and glory:
 all the light in the Gospel was but the effect of his coming
 in the flesh; and doth all preach his coming in the flesh
 with the nature, intent, consequents and effects thereof.
 So that all that are sent of God bear witness hereunto; but
 that which is not of God, doth endeavour some way or
 other

other to undermine it. In true Prophets, anointed with the true Spirit, their doctrine, their conversation, all their principles and practices preach this: but false spirits, though they may outwardly acknowledg it (which, with God, is not confessing or acknowledging) yet in effect and reality they do deny it, and fight against it.

Now by observing and trying spirits in this point, ye come to know them. That which naturally falleth in with the work of God, naturally bending it self to build it up, in the truth of light and grace received from God to that end, that must needs be of God. Every spirit, the drift of whose course, the nature of whose doctrine acknowledgeth the coming of Christ in the flesh, is that God who formed the Spirit of Christ, and quickened and guided it in the flesh. He that speaketh the truth, and helpeth to further and propagate the truth, doubtless be is of the truth.

VER. 3. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.

As the Spirit which is of God, discovereth it self to be of God, by its knowing and owning of Christs coming in the flesh; so that spirit which is not of God, discovereth it self to be not of God, by its not confessing of this. This language can only be spoken by the child which is new-born and brought forth in the light, who speaketh what he hath seen and learned there. But he who is of darkness, Antichrist the first born and heir of Satan, (whom ye know is to come, and who already begins to peep forth in the world) cannot see or confess this thing, but his very nature, heart and spirit deny and

gainſay it; which he plainly manifeſteth in his ſeeking and ſetting up another way of life (even under the fleſhly rudiments and ordinances of Chriſt) ſutable to that which Chriſt came to deſtroy, and contrary to that; which the very end and intent of Chriſts coming in the fleſh was to ſet up and eſtabliſh. Of this ſpirit and make, is Antichriſt; Thus he is, and according to this he acts; and cannot be or do otherwiſe; what contrary vails or appearances ſoever he may put on, and cloud himſelf under. Or (and perhaps more plainly) thus,

The great deſign and work of Chriſt is to bring men off from themſelves unto God (the foundation whereof he laid by his coming in the fleſh :) to take men off from their natural principle to live by the communication of life from him; and when that fails, to feel and mourn under death; but to ſeek and reſiſt life in the former nature, principle, and ſpirit no more. But other ſpirits (the various ſpirits of Antichriſt) though they ſeem to faſten upon God, yet they center again in the fleſh; and rebuild the natural principle, into which corruption alwaies creeps. This is the very ſtrain and ſoul of Antichriſt; All the religion, knowledge, and praſe of Antichriſt in the things of God, tendeth to build up the ſpirit of man, to feed its old nature by waies of outward worſhip according to the letter, as it pretendeth, yea alſo even by waies of mortification and ſelf-denial, which are very pleaſing to the ingenuity of the fleſhly nature, ſo far as they conſiſt with the wiſdom thereof. So that the more a man is taught herein, and the more ſkilful he grows according to the fleſh, the more notably doth he ſet up himſelf, and deny Chriſt. Now he, who hath in any form, way, or ſtrain of religion been free from this, let him caſt the firſt ſtone at Antichriſt.

VER. 4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, then he that is in the World.*

This is the ground of the fight between you and the spirit of Satan and Antichrist, and this also is the ground of the conquest on your side, viz. *because ye are of God.* Your littleness may be a further temptation to your enemies, in reference to their hope of prevailing: but that which kindles the fire of their contention with you, and opposition against you, is your nature. If ye be of God, if ye have his nature in you, the spirits of the contrary nature will set upon you, and ye must either vanquish or dye.

And by this means also ye overcome them; *because ye are of God.* That life which is in the least of you, cannot be overcome by the greatest strength of the enemy, but which way soever the spirit of Satan and Antichrist breaks forth, ye presently discover and avoid their wiles, making their darkness and deceit fly before the power of that light, life, and truth which dwells in you, and issues forth from you.

And this is the reason why ye, who are born of God, still overcome, be ye never so little and weak: because God is with you, because God is in you. The spirits of deceit are very wise and strong, but the wisdom and strength of God, which is engaged against them on your behalf, is greater: Nay God is in you with that wisdom and strength, so that when ever they assault you, they assault that wisdom and strength which gained you from them, and which (having united you to it self) is become yours, yea it is one with you, so that that strength in every respect (both in reference to it self, and to you, and to them) is engaged forthwith to apply it self to deal

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with them. The strong man armed cannot impose upon you, nor dispossess you of the life, because a stronger then he dwells in you, and keeps possession of you.

VER. 5. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

This is the difference between the Seed of God and of man. The Seed of God is of God, is of the Nature of God, is the vessel wherein God dwells and reigns; and which he preserves. The seed of Man is of man, of the nature of man, wherein the Serpent dwells, and reigns to death and destruction. Those which fight against you with the false appearances of truth, and whom through God ye have overcome, they are of the worldly nature, of the spirit of this world, of the principle of this world. They are not from above as they pretend; but of the earth, of the unclean nature of the earth, wherein the unclean spirit of darkness dwells.

And according as their principle is, such are their words and speeches concerning the things of God. They speak of them from and according to the principle of the world. *Therefore speak they of the world.* Their language is suited to their nature, to their root, to their principle, and it is only concerning things in their own line. All the religion they teach is suited to the spirit of the world, and is it self worldly: yea they feed the life and spirit of the world in their greatest seemingly subduing and subjugating of it.

And from hence it is that the nature of man is so ready to hear and receive them, because they hold forth that which comes within its line. They preach Christ is such a way as is suitable to flesh. They preach the doctrine of the cross so as the flesh cannot but desire and embrace: and it doth not thereby dye, as it thinks it does, but li-
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with the more abundantly. This is the reason that all sorts of religions do so take hold upon men, viz. because they are of the world, because by the subtle spirit of deceit, they are fitted to the nature and principle of the world; and the world by entertaining them become not losers, but gainers. But the knowledge of the truth brings a real, an utter, a perfect loss upon the spirit which entertains it.

VER. 6. We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us: hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of error.

We who are new-formed and brought forth in the light, and who are chosen by God to hold forth and propagate this light in the world, we are of God, and not of the world. Our language is not of the world; we speak not of the things of God, after the manner of deceitful spirits, the foundation of whose nature and life (even in their very religion) is in the principles of the world. But we being of God, speak according to God, according to the demonstration and light of his spirit in us, as they being of the world speak of the world, that is to say of religion according to the nature, principle, and dialect of the world.

And as the world heareth them, because they are of the world, and speak of the world: So he that is of God, and knoweth God, heareth us. He that is acquainted with God, knowing the light and life in him, will also know, own, justify, and embrace that wisdom and life which God hath placed in us, to empty into those whom he shall please to call out of the world. He that is born of God, he that is acquainted with his light and spirit, will taste the sweetness and riches of that treasure which God hath chosen us vessels to convey, and will hearken to us, and suck the virtue and life of God out of us. But he
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that relieth not what we testify of God, but hath itching ears after more glorious manifestations of truth, as hee accounteth them, he is not of God.

By this means we can distinguish between the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of error. The Spirit of truth teacheth us to cleave to the truth, teacheth us to own that wisdom which God hath manifested in the dispensation of the Gospel. The Spirit of truth teacheth men to relish truth, to lye at the lips of those who are inspired and called forth by God to speak forth truth. The Spirit of error with-draws from the truth, breedeth and nourisheth jealousies concerning those whom God sendeth, and allureth to other teachers and doctrines, whom it clotheth as much as may be with the glory and likeness of truth, (and the flesh may be more apt to judge them true and worthy of entertainment :) but that which is of God and of the nature of truth, findeth offence in their nature notwithstanding all this, and satisfaction in the nature of truth. And by this is the Spirit of truth and error made manifest to them who are in the truth, and come forth with the truth.

VER. 7. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.

Here is a sweet exhortation indeed, to those who are in the life, to give scope to their life, to bring forth and enjoy the sweetness of their own life. Love is the life of him who is beloved by God. He who is seized by love, and changed in love, love is his life. And the most natural and sensible way which God hath appointed for the exercise of this love, is toward them who are of the same life, toward *one another*. Now saith this sweet Apostle, let us apply our selves to it, *Beloved, let us love one another,*

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There may appear occasions and provocations in this fleshly state to interrupt love, but let not us hearken thereto; but give up our selves to love; hear the voice of love; what ever love commandeth; let us do; what ever love forbiddeth, let us forbear.

For love is of God. He that is a Christian, pretends to God, aspires to be like him, embraceth every thing that is of him; and turneth from every thing which is contrary to him. Now *love*, saith the Apostle, *is of God*. The pattern of it, the nature of it, the practise of it, the fruits of it are all of God, and according to God. Envy, malice, hatred, covetousness, &c. are of the flesh, and of Satan, but love is of God. Common love, love of the ordinary nature is of God (which consideration calls for the cherishing of it every where, both among men and the creatures:) but the love wherewith ye are taught and commanded to love one another, is much more of God.

And every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.

Love is not only of God, but it is likewise a demonstration and evidence of your son-ship, and of the nature of your knowledg. It manifesteth the truth of your regeneration and of your light. No man can love unless he be new-born. The love of God groweth not from the old root of mans corrupt nature, but by the seed which God soweth in a mans spirit, whereby he leaveneth and new-formeth it. Nay although a man have the seed of life in him, yet he cannot learn the art of love unless he be born and brought forth in the light, and have known God. He that is born of God, hath a nature fit to love; and he that knoweth God, knoweth how to love. The nature of man, which hath all of truth and goodness dashed in peeces in it, cannot love. He cannot at all love that which is of another nature, which he knoweth not, and

which appeareth as his enemy : nay he cannot truly love the nature of the creature. He naturally seeketh to serve himself of it, and to please himself with it (and for that end, may also endeavour to please it :) but he doth not understandingly and truly love either it, or himself. He therefore that loveth not in shew, but in deed and in truth, he is born and brought forth by him of whom love is, and he knoweth him, who, by the light and love of his nature, can alone teach this lesson.

V E R. 8. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*

He that hath not learned to love, he hath not learned the truth as it is in the true light of God, he hath not known God, he hath not seen that line of love which is in the Nature of God, which begetteth love where-ever it is beheld. For *God is love*. God and love are all one, so that if he had known God, he would have known love : therefore, in that he loveth not, he plainly manifesteth that he hath not known him who is love. For if he had known him, he could not but have fallen in love with that love, have received in that love, and have brought forth that love which it saw him to be. So that though blackness, clouds and darkness might overshadow him, yet open his nature, and let him be an act like himself, ye shall still find him love. Thus is every one that knoweth God.

For God is love. There are two great images, shadows or representations of God, the one is light, the other love. Light begets love, and dwels in it, manifesting it self through it: and love keeps within the bounds of light, which makes it so pure, holy and excellent, and preserves it from all folly and vanity.

God is love.

Love is the Nature of God. Every thing in him, is Love: every thing that flows from him is love. He is the sweet Fountain of love; which issueth out all, and only love. His eye is the eye of love, his ear is the ear of love, his tongue is the tongue of love, his heart is the heart of love. He hath no skil, no wisdom, no power to be any thing, or to do any thing but love. Indeed he may seem and appear otherwise: For as Satan, the spirit of enmity, may cloth himself with the appearance of love; so God, the Spirit of love, may cloth himself with the appearance of enmity: but he that cannot read love in the very harsh-est strains thereof, cannot read the Nature of God, nor the meaning of that appearance. It is fit indeed that the creature in this its present state, should dread the Sovereignty of God, and not know his love: but is it not also fit that Gods Sovereignty should be subject to the royal Law of life in him, which is his love?

What can there be in any thing, to draw forth from God that which is not in him? Can any thing draw bitterness out of the fountain of sweetness? Can love, and the greatest tenderness of nature bear hatred and cruelty? *Fury is not in me*, saith the Lord. There can be no other fury in God then the *jealousie of love*, nor no other cruelty but the *wisdom of love*.

What cause or object is there of misery, which doth not excite love to pity? And if the bowels of love be once effectually stirred, all the wisdom and powers of its nature are immediately engaged, according to the sound that pity hath made within it. Doth not love naturally pity weak ones and weakness? Now what is sin but weakness? Yea the very wilfulness of sin is but weakness: for if the nature of the spirit were not weakened with darkness and corruption, it could not be wilful. And though this wilfulness call for severity from God, accord-

dint to the Law of every dispensation, yet to somewhat deeper in the Nature of God (which knoweth how to measure it anew), it calleth for pity, and the ear of God heareth it. Surely if God be love, he can bring forth nothing but love, nay he can suffer nothing of evil and misery to break forth, but what love will conquer; and make an universal advantage by.

V E R. 9. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Great was the love of God to us, and great hath been the manifestation of it. What ever eye shall behold what God hath done for us, will readily confess that he hath dearly loved us. God never begat but one Son. Of all things that are to be found in Heaven or Earth, there is but one only substantial image of himself: One whom he formed to be the treasure of all that is in him. Now this treasure he parted with, he abased his Son with all his own life and glory in him, he clothed him with filthy raiments (even with our weak fleshly nature) he sent him here in the world to preach and testifie in sackcloth, to suffer all the weaknesses, injuries and temptations that our nature is subject to; and at length to give up himself to death, and all this for our sake, for the love he bare to us, and from the desire he had that we might live his life. Though he was able to live the life which we lost, yet we being not able to live it with him, he laies it down at the commandment of the Father, that he might bring forth a life, and us out of death into that life, wherein we might live together. *He spared not his own Son*, but sent him out of his own bosome; and gave him up to shame, sufferings, and death, that he might become a ransom for us, that he might redeem us from death and misery,

misery, and we might through him receive life, and live again in the presence of God.

VER. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

This is a manifestation of love indeed, that when there was no love in us towards God, nor no loveliness in our persons, in that present estate wherein we were, yet then the love of God wrought so strongly with him for us, as not to stick at the greatest price that could be given for our redemption.

There are two things wonderfully set of love. The one is, *its rise from itself*, when it move of its own accord, of its own nature: when it doth not love, because it is loved, or findeth lovely; but soweth love, and maketh lovely, because it loveth. The other is *the strength of its motion*, when nothing seems unto it hard for the sake of what it loveth: when it can freely give its own life for the life of that, upon which it fasteneth its love.

By both these is the love of God set of in whom they find place to the full: for his love is most perfectly free and meerly of it self, not at all invited by us, for we had none, but were in a state of enmity to him; and made one with that which his soul most abhorreth. Yet even then he loved us, then his heart and bowels wrought toward us, then his wisdom and strength put themselves to save us, and he spared not his own Son (nor himself, who suffered in his Son even to the utmost) but sent him to lay down his life and become a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. There being no other way of peace and life for us, the love wherewith he loved us would not suffer him to stick at it, though it was (without controversy) the most grievous thing that could be to his nature.

VER. 11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

God and his Nature are the rule of every Being and Nature, and of all motions of love and righteousness in every kind. They who are taken into the light of the Gospel, are the more peculiar image of God, and are chosen and fitted by him to hold forth more especially his life and glory. God therefore being love, and having so loved, and they receiving from God the same love, they ought to manifest it in such a way as God hath appointed, *viz.* toward one another. The image of God is every where, therefore they ought to love every thing: but the more especial image of God is formed and brought forth in one another, therefore they ought most abundantly to love one another: yea and if it be possible to act over that love, which God first acted toward them, and then bestowed upon them: *viz.* in beginning love, when there is occasion, one toward another, in loving not alwaies from what they behold, but sometimes from the love of their own nature, and likewise in being still ready to give up themselves as a sacrifice for the brethren.

VER. 12. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

No man hath ever attained or been admitted into that happiness, at any time whatsoever, as to see God. When they have been most purified, most in favour and communion with God, yet this hath still been withheld from them. Indeed the eye of this nature is incapable of beholding God. God revealeth himself to his Saints, and

to his servants the Prophets under veyls and riddles, and they behold a shining of him through his veyls, but see not him. His brightness would put out the weak eye of this nature. *Moses*, with whom God so friendly conversed, could not behold the face of God. *Paul*, who was wrapped up into the third Heavens, was in a trance at least, and not himself according to nature; nor able to tel to his own nature how or what he saw. Hee might see a more wonderful discovery of God and all spiritual things, even such as might be said to suit Heaven it self, and yet not see God as he is. *John* who tasted so much of God, and was so followed with visions and revelations of him, and so filled with sweetness of spirit and light from him, yet was ready to fall down and worship an Angel, which he could never have done if he had seen God.

This therefore cannot be expected from love. Love cannot carry a man beyond what the life, bestowed upon him in this capacity, can advance him to: but love can carry him as far as he can go. Love can let as much of him into God, and as much of God into him, as can be admitted and received on either hand. Love can fix them in each others spirit, and make them live and dwell together.

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.

If love be in us, God is in us. If we love the life, if we love the Nature of God in one another, God must needs dwell in us, from whom this love, and all the motions thereof do arise. Yea if we love but the human nature, the natural spirit and flesh one of another truly, and according to the sweetness and righteousness of love, God dwelleth in us, for from his nature and presence alone can this also flow.

All the love that is to be found in this world, is not love, is not the substance, is but the shadow of love.

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And it is not a right, not a true shadow: but only a broken, a false shadow. Yea and such as it is, the nature of man cannot abide in it, but is easily driven out of it. He therefore that can bring forth true substantial love, that can in truth love the Nature of God and of Christ in the brotherhood, or he that can bring forth the true shadow of love, that can love the nature of man according to the truth of his own nature, he must needs have God dwelling in him: for this is not the fruit of mans nature, from which it can issue no more, but of God changing, and dwelling in his changed nature.

And his love is perfected in us.

God hath bestowed his love upon them whom he formeth anew. As he giveth them his own nature, so he giveth them the love of his nature. This love he planteth, and watereth, and causeth to grow up to perfection. By this love he teacheth them to love him, and by the exercise of this love toward the brethren, he perfecteth their love to him. So that he that hath fully learned to love the brethren, in him the love of God is perfected; in him the love of God is grown to its stature; and is able to issue forth in fulness and perfection, not only toward the brethren, but also toward God.

VER. 13. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit.*

Love to the brethren is a great evidence that God dwelleth in us, but that which makes it most cleer and demonstrative to our spirits, is the gift of his spirit. The various fruits of love are but as so many several arguments thereof, but the gift of the spirit is a perfect demonstration.

Hereby know we.

Every thing is known by its spirit. It is not the form
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of a man that makes a man, but the nature and temper of his Spirit: Nor is a man present where his body is, but where his Spirit is: *Though absent in body, yet present in spirit, saith Paul.* The Lord also is known by his Spirit, and doth all things by his Spirit. He gives himself, where he gives his Spirit: and he himself is received, where his Spirit is received, where his Spirit dwells; he dwells; and that which dwells in his Spirit, dwells in him.

That we dwell in him, and he in us, because, &c.

God would never have given us of his Spirit, unless he had meant to have taken us into union and communion with himself; unless he had meant to dwell in us, and that we also should dwell in him. The Spirit of God cannot dwell any where, but where God dwells; nor will it dwell any where, but in that Spirit which is transplanted into God: So that the gift of the Spirit to any soul, is the beginning and foundation of the in-dwelling of God in that soul, and of its in-dwelling in God.

And this is the great ground of certainty in every dispensation, whereby those who are in the true light (in any of the dispensations of God) come truly to know, namely by the gift of the Spirit. He that hath the Spirit, hath the light of the Spirit, which truly manifesteth things, yea and he hath the Spirit with him to open his eyes in the light, and to dispel the mists of the darkness of his own spirit. Now upon this advantage it is easie to know, and to know certainly. He that receiveth a line of truth, and with it the Spirit of truth, may not he truly judge of things within that line? He that is a stranger, he that is out of the light, he that hath not the Spirit of God, he cannot judge of the things of God: All the reasonings of his mind are but imaginations and ghesies, and he is but a fool for so doing; for who but a fool, would set up a dark apprehension of his own, in the place of reality and truth? But he that is in the light, he that is of the

truth, he that hath the reed, he measureth; he that hath received the Spirit, he knoweth; and *hereby* he knoweth.

VER. 14. *And we have seen and do testifie, that the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the World.*

As the common nature of things runs all in a line, so doth also the new nature. There are diversities of sounds in the world, but there is but one language and voice of truth. There is but one Father, but one Son, but one Saviour, but one Spirit, but one Sight, but one Testimony. Those who are admitted into the true light, which is but one, have seen that one truth and testifie to it. They who have received the same Spirit, are led by him into the same vision of God, and bear witness to it. And this is that which they bear witness to, that the Father hath sent the Son to save; and that the Son, whom the Father hath sent, is the Saviour.

The Nature of the Father cannot suffer the world, which is its own child, to perish. The nature of love cannot suffer the enemy to gain & possess any of its territories. That which is the object of love, which object love can make happy, how can love suffer it to be miserable? Therefore the Nature of the Father provideth a Redeemer; He sendeth his mighty Son to redeem his weaknesse. And as his weak ones were lost in this World, so he sendeth his Son into this world to recover them. Upon this account did Christ come in the flesh, and we have seen him being come, whom the Father hath sent, and do testifie that this was he.

VER. 15. *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

And indeed this confession ariseth from the light of God, from Gods being in the Spirit, and from the Spirits being in God. *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona* (said Christ to Peter, upon Peters confession, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God*) *for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.* Flesh and blood cannot teach it, nor can flesh and blood receive it. Flesh and blood (I mean this fleshly nature of our spirits) may take it up for granted, as it may any other principle or revealed thing, but it cannot in truth see and acknowledg it, as it cannot any other spiritual thing. He must be in the light, who seeth Christ: and without seeing him, who can rightly confess him? The Son is only known in the Father. He who dwels in God, and in whom God dwels, he sees the salvation and Saviour of God, and he can confess which is he, and which is his salvation: but he that is without, knoweth it not; and he is but a liar, and liable to judgment for taking upon him to confess it. *O be abused all flesh before the Lord, and take no more upon you to be in the light, and to know: but pray for the true discovery of your own darkness, which this seeming light hides from your eyes! Because ye say ye see* (by virtue of that which ye call light, in those several waies and strains of religion into which ye have wandered) *therefore those sins, which ye think are blotted out, do still remain, yea and greater sins also.*

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VER. 16. *And we have known and believed the Love that God hath in us. (1 Cor. xii.)*

Te are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, in which God dwelleth, and into which he bringeth, and wherein he treasureth up all his spiritual excellencies, even the holy things of his own nature. There are three things which he most especially treasureth up in the Spirits of his people, and which he dispenseth from thence at his pleasure; viz. his Light, his Life, and his Love. It pleaseth not God, when he hath once formed an house to put them in, to enjoy them any longer in himself alone, but he disposeth of them in their own place in his own house. As the people of God, when once they are brought home to him, treasure up all in him, and enjoy all in him: To God, when he hath sited his people for his own habitation, for his proper home, brings all into them, dwells with them, and enjoys all in them. So that all that is henceforth needful toward their perfection, is but the growth and opening of what is already in them: And that also let out upon the world, is its light and its life. There is all there in the seed; yea and not only so, but he that formed the seed is there with it, and all in him is there in perfection. And thus God suffers in the weakness, misery, and hard labours of the seed, and is also satisfied in his own fulness at the same time, and in the same place, viz. in this habitation of his holiness.

The love of God is in us, that is the place of it, there it sears it self. As God from his love, hath chosen us to be vessels of love; so he empties his love into us. He calls for our hearts, *My Son* saith he, *give me thy heart*, and what is it for, but to fill with the love of his heart. He sends us his Spirit to breath his love into us, and thereby to draw forth our love into him. Yea because there is no
love

love pleasing to him but his own, therefore doth he give his love unto us and make it ours, that we may return that which perfectly pleaseth him. He hath shed abroad his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. He hath sowed his love up and down in our earth like seed, that there it may grow up, and he may have such a crop as will please him. And he hath sowed as plentiful as he desires to reap.

Now this being in them, rooting it self and shooting up in their spirits, they come to be acquainted with it, and to know it. They know its nature, they know its motions, they know its course, &c. The heart of God being opened to their hearts, according to the capacity of their spirits, by that spirit which knoweth both, they come to have a true understanding thereof, and a confidence in their spirits raised thereupon from a solid ground; inasmuch as they cannot but believe. They cannot but trust him who hath the nature of such a love in him. They know his love so, as they cannot misdoubt of any thing he can do for them, (and what can he not do?) for his love cannot but engage his power to the utmost, according to the line of light and wisdom in his own most holy nature.

God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

He that knoweth love, knoweth God; he that trusteth love, trusteth God; he that is in love, is in God; he that abideth in love, abideth in God; and he in whom love abideth, God abideth: for God is love; and by letting out love upon us, he letteth forth himself upon us; and by taking us into love, he taketh us into himself; and by acquainting us with the nature, virtue, and life of love, he acquainteth us with himself, with his own nature, life and virtue. So much as there is of love in any soul, so much is there of God, for God is love.

VER. 17. *Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

Herein, by our dwelling in God, by Gods dwelling in us; by the knowledg of his love to us, through its growth and exercise in us, by our mutual living and walking together here in this world, by this means the love which God hath bestowed upon us, comes to be perfected; and we attain both to love God perfectly, and to be perfectly acquainted with his love to us: and in us.

And this makes us bold at present, and will make us bold at last, when all faces else shall be covered with shame. There is a day coming which will search and try the perfection of love. There is a day of judgment coming, wherein God will try every nature, every motion, every action, every spirit; O who shall then be able to stand before him? What Angel-like nature and life is there, which shall not then cover its face with its wrings? And yet it is the pleasure of the Lord that we should not be daunted with the bright fire of his eyes at that great and terrible day: therefore doth he exercise us so abundantly, and take such great care to perfect his love in us now: Because if we know his nature, if his love come to be perfected in us, we cannot but have boldness. If we be perfectly comprehended in his love, and his love be perfectly brought forth in us and understood by us, the most dreadful shape and representation of himself that he can possibly put on, cannot dismay us: but if we do not thoroughly understand God, though we be of him, yet the dreadfulnes of that appearance of his at the day of judgment will overcome us, and very much rowse up and quicken that fear which yet hath place in us.

Because

On Job. Ep. 1. Ch. 4.

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Because as he is, so are we in this world.

This is the great ground of confidence, this is the great reason why we should be bold then, because we have been one with him, have had the same spirit, have led the same course. God when once he unites himself to the soul, runs the same lot with it, becomes as it is, and makes it as he is. As the life is hid in him, so is it also in us: As in him it is persecuted by the world, so in us likewise: As he sinneth not, so neither do we (saith the Apostle) who are born of God. And as we are weak and afflicted, and groan under our burthens, so doth he also feel the weight of the same miseries and burthens, and groan with us. The life in us keeps pace with the life in him, which is in communion with it: and as he by his spirit leads on and goes before, so doth the life in us follow him. And what should then disturb us at that day, when he comes to judg our enemies and the weakness of our flesh; and whatsoever hath been an interruption to the current of his life in our spirits? There is nothing then will appear in God, which can be of any danger to us: for he comes to be our Saviour, and not our destroyer, and to give us his Crown in the other world, as we have born his cross and suffered with him in this. Having had the same lot and course with him here, hee would have us have the same freedom of Spirit with him then, and fear him under all that dreadful apparition of his Majesty and severity, no more than he fears himself. And because the perfection of his love alone in us can do this, therefore is he so desirous and careful of perfecting it with us.

VER.

VER. 18. *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment: he that feareth, is not made perfect in love.*

The womb, out of which God brings the soul whom he begets in Christ, is love: and the nature which he begets there, is love: and all its motions are from love, and in love, and without fear.

He that is begotten under the Law, though he hath a taste of love, and is called upon and instructed to *love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength*: yet he is also taught to fear: and his fear is his great advantage.

He that is begotten under the dispensation of the Gospel, though he hath a much deeper and sweeter smattering of grace and love than the former, yet he is not wholly freed from fear, but it is necessary for him also: *Be not high-minded, but fear.*

But he that is begotten in love, in the true and royall nature of love, he hath no fear in him: and that fear which yet hangs about his natural spirit, while it is in the flesh, is still more and more expelled by love: and when love is perfected in him, fear is wholly expelled even from thence also.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear.

In the love which God sows in the hearts of his own, there is no fear. The fear that is to be found in any such heart, is not from the nature of that love which God hath sown there; but from its weak sight of God, and from the danger of its present state, in this or that particular dispensation wherein now it is set. And this estate and condition of the soul maketh fear necessary: for it is its proper defence and safety, preserving it in union and communion with God under the present dispensation. So that,

that, that speech of the wise man is very weighty, *Blessed is the man that feareth alwaies*. He cannot be a wilfull transgressor (which is the dangerous and desperate kind of transgression) who truly feareth to offend.

But yet love, in its own nature, is not the begetter of fear, but the expeller of it. Our love towards a thing will expel fear much (for we are apt to think wel of, and can hardly suspect harm from what we love:) but the love of that thing to us, sown and growing up in us, must needs expel fear much more. Now the love of God hath no fear in it, it hath nothing of the nature of fear in its nature, and it is sown in our nature a pure seed of love without fear, and when it is grown up in our nature, and hath over spread it, it will so fill it with the nature and fullness of love, that it will leave no room for the least fear. While there is either fear, or room for fear left in us, love is not perfected. If the most dreadful appearance of God at the great and terrible day, can stir up fear in us, we want the growth and perfection of love: for, where love is perfected, it casteth out fear out of the nature, heart and spirit of him in whom it is perfected, insomuch as no appearance of God whatsoever can possibly make him fear any more.

Because fear hath torment. This is the reason why love will not endure any fear. Love cannot endure the torment of that which it loveth: and fear is of a tormenting nature, and doth more or less torment where it is. All the objects of fear are tormenting. Though there be very much love of the soul to God, and very great assurance of Gods love to the soul, yet if withal there be but the least fear, there will be some torment. Torment is the constant effect of the nature of fear, and it is the proper and good effect: for the good which fear doth is by tormenting. By administring present torment, it preventeth future torment.

But torment was never intended to abide. Love may at present do good by fear and torment: but it doth not judge it good for them to remain for ever. Fear is very useful in every dispensation to make wise towards the doing of good, and the avoiding of evil, and in reference to the consequences which attend either of them: but love nutureth up to another state, wherein fear and torment will be of no use, but altogether unprofitable, and prejudicial to the life and full current of love; and therefore love must needs cast it out.

He that feareth, is not made perfect in love.

While there is fear in the soul, while fear issues forth from the soul; love is not all, love doth not all, love is not perfected. It is the work of love to cast out fear, and love as it groweth up, doth it still more and more. Where therefore it is not done, love is not fully grown, love is not perfected.

VER. 19. *We love him, because he first loved us.*

The love of our nature toward him, was kindled by the love of his nature unto us. Our love did not draw forth his love, but his love did both beget and draw forth our love. Our love lay a sleep, yea was dead, and could never have rightly moved again toward him, unless it had been refreshed and renewed by him. Nay the whole truth of our love depends upon him, both in its being and in all its motions. There is love in us, because he hath imparted of his love unto us: and love in us moveth toward him, because his love worketh within us.

VER.

VER. 20. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

Every man will pretend to love God: but if a man doth indeed love God, he hath the love of God bestowed upon him; and that love is pointed and taught by God to go forth toward the brethren. He therefore that loveth not the brethren, he hath not this love; neither doth he or can he love: and thinking and saying that he loveth him, he lieth both in his heart and tongue.

And indeed how is it possible, that he which loveth not the nature and life of God, which breaketh forth and is made visible to him in his brother, should love that nature and life in God, which hath ever been hidden from his eyes? Love ariseth from sight, it creepeth in at the eye; if therefore that of God which is visible, be strange unto him, and he love it not: how can he love that which is invisible? If that which is nigh unto him take neither his eye nor heart, how can he be taken with that which is so remote from him? Indeed, men know not God, but set up an imagination concerning him, according to the temper of their own minds, and because they love this, therefore they think they love God: But his nature is as little beloved by them, as it is known unto them.

VER. 21. *And this commandement have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.*

This is the great commandment of God, this is the commandment of his nature, this is the commandment both of the letter and spirit of every dispensation. When he letteth out any light upon his Angels, upon Adam, upon fallen man, upon the Jews, upon Disciples, This he

faith to them, *Love*. Love me, love your neighbour : Love me, Love your brother. Love me, Love your fellow-creatures, and all the breakings forth of my life, nature, and spirit in them, in its several kinds.

And he that receiveth the light of God, he that receiveth his will either in the letter or in the spirits, he receiveth this. *This commandment have we from him*. The sum of all the instructions of Satan is hatred, various strains and waies of hatred under shews and pretences of love: This is it which he teaches, to dissemble love to God, to the creatures, to the children and servants of God, but really to hate them. This is his commandment. But the commandment of God is love, *Love : o the brethren*, which the Disciples of Christ, in those daies did really, powerfully, and effectually receive from him.

C H A P. V.

VER. I.

Whosoever beleeueth that Iesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.



GOD sent *Christ* to be *Iesus*, his Anointed One to be the Saviour, and to save by the anointing. He anoints the eye, that it may see him: he anoints the ear, that it may hear his voice: he anoints the heart, that it may know and receive him. By this means alone can Christ be known to be the Anointed One, namely, by being anointed by him. By being begotten in his nature, and anointed with his Spirit, a man comes to know his nature and his Spirit, and to trust the Fountain of that oyl or anointing in him, whereof he hath received some drop-pings from him.

The eye of this world cannot see Christ, The heart of this world cannot trust him. He therefore that acknowledgeth Christ to be the Anointed One, and so receiveth the anointing from him, and liveth upon the anointing in him (both which latter are necessary consequents of the former) must needs be new-made, must needs be born of God, who alone can beget and bring him forth into this. Indeed man may be taught by rote to say and think *Iesus* to be the *Christ*, but it is only by rote, and not in true light: for he knoweth not what he saith or thinketh, in speaking or thinking either of *Iesus*, or of the anoin-

ting. He may acknowledg somewhat which is represented to his understanding from the Scriptures; but his understanding hath never apprehended, nor can possibly apprehend what that nature is which is the Saviour, nor what that anointing is wherewith the Father hath anointed him. So that to speak truly and properly, according as things are before God, he doth not beleeve *Jesus* to be the *Christ*. But he that is new-born, he that hath a new eye, and he that hath seen this new sight, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the new light of God, he believeth *Jesus* to be the *Christ*.

And he that is born of God and believeth this, he loveth that nature and spirit which begat him. He loveth *Christ*, and he loveth *the Father* of *Christ*, and he loveth *the Spirit* of *Christ*, all which have been his Father. It is impossible to be a child, and to be without child-like affection.

And it is as impossible also to be without brother-like affection. He that loveth his Father, will also love his brother. He that loveth the nature of the Father, loveth the communication of his nature, loveth that begetting property which is in the Father, and so must needs love what ever is begotten by him. He that loveth the nature of that life which is in the Father, cannot but love it in every vessel which the Father pleaseth to poure it into.

VER. 2. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments.*

We know that we love God, by our love to his children: and we know that we love his children, by our love to him, and by our walking in the same line of his life with them.

Spiritual things run into and evidence one another. By the light of God, the life of God is known; and by the life

life of God, the light of God is known. The Father is revealed in and by the Son, and the Son is revealed in and by the Father. Faith is known by love, and love is known by faith, and both are known by obedience, and obedience is known by them both. The true letter is known in and by the true Spirit, and the true Spirit is known in and by the true letter.

VER. 3. *For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments.*

This is the genuine fruit of love, and discovereth the nature and truth of it. To have high, elevated thoughts, and raised apprehensions concerning a thing, this is not love: but naturally to let in the nature and will of a thing into ones spirit, and to bring it forth from within ones spirit, in ones inclinations, motions and actions, This is love. To please the nature or bent of our spirits, with notions or meditations of any kind, either concerning God or religion, how ravishing soever, This is not love: but to receive in the Nature of God, and the Law of his will into the mind, and to give them scope and power over our whole nature, curbing and crucifying what ever is not agreeable unto them, This is love.

There are two proper desires and endeavours of love: One is, to have every thing pleasing; The other is, to have nothing displeasing to that which it loves. Both these are performed toward God by the observation of his commandments, which forbid all things displeasing, and enjoyn all things pleasing to him.

And his commandments are not grievous.

There is no irksomeness in any of the commandments of God, to that nature which is born of God. Love makes them very easie. Indeed, to him that wanteth love,

love, or hath not a nature to answer the Law of them, to him they are grievous; to him they are like a weighty and uneasie yoke, galling and vexing of him: but they are as pleasant to the nature of the child, as they are natural to the will of the Father.

There are three things which make commandments grievous.

1. The *contrariety* of them to that nature or spirit which is commended. When the nature or spirit of a person is not at all molded to the nature of the commandment, but he remaineth in his old enmity against it, the commandment must needs be very bitter to him.

2. The *difficulty* of them. When either they transcend the strength of the party commanded, or are very laborous to him.

3. The *severity* of him who commands, in case of transgression. When the penalty is great, and the eye of the Judge strict in observing and recompencing for what is done amiss.

Thus were all the commandments of God, under the Law, to the *Jews*. They were very contrary to them, very difficult for them, and God very severe: for *every transgression received a just recompence of reward*. And so also are all the commandments of God in the Gospel to Christians, so far as they are meerly law and letter. But the commandments of God are not at all so to them who are in the life, and who live in the spirit of life.

The commandments of God are not *contrary* to them, but agreeable to their mind and nature. *Lo I come, saith the soul, I delight to do thy will, O God*. All the commandments of God to them, are but that they should live the life of their own spirits, and let in the life of his spirit, and (through the power and vertue of his spirit) curb and subdue that which is an enemy to their own natures & his, all which are the most genuine desires of their hearts.

Nor

Nor are they *difficult*, but easie to their spirits, easie to that nature to which they are so natural. *My yoke is easie, and my burthen is light.* It is the flesh that complains of the difficulty of any of the commandments of God, or (as most) the poor spirit tired and overburthened with the flesh; and so its complaints are not properly against the commandments, but against its own flesh. There are three things which make the commandments of God very easie and pleasant.

1. *The principle of life* which is within, which stands ready to be commanded, and is aforehand leavening its fleshy nature, to bring it into readines of subjection to the Law of life.

2. *The Spiritual vigor* of the commands. The commandments of God, are not dead and littéral to them who are in the life; but there is vertue and life in them, and that vertue and life goes along with them. *The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.* They are like to the creating word of God, which saith, *Let it be,* and it is so. *I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.* The commandments of God in the Gospel, they are no less then the lively distilling of his mind within the spirit. He that receiveth any of the commandment of God without life, without spirit, hears not the voice of God in the Gospel. He hears only the littéral sound (but not the natural life of the commandment) which is but the outwardness or picture of its nature, not the true inward substance and nature of it.

3. *There is the Holy Spirit of God* to quicken the principle of life within, and make it active: Both to quicken the commandments, and also to awaken and make the principle of life more lively: yea to fill both with life, and so draw forth the life of both. So that the more commandments, the more of the spirit, the more strength, the more life, the more pleasure.

Nor is there *severity* in God towards them upon failings, but the greatest tenderness and readiness to pardon that possibly can be. Indeed in the Gospel there is nothing but pity and pardon. Severity is only a concomitant of the legal and literal part of the Gospel, which in due season is to be done away. The Gospel speaks *life, love, and peace* very freely and fully; and there is no room left for missing of it, or turning from it. The love of God in the Gospel diffuseth it self, and maketh happy without the least leave of the creature: but when it hath done its work, and the creature is overcome by it and made one with it, it will be perfectly to the creatures liking.

VER. 4. *For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world.*

The great enemy and impediment to the life of Christ in the soul, is *the world*. It is that which drawes the heart from the love of God, and from obedience unto his commandments, to adulterate with it. And indeed it hath great power over this natural spirit, because it is sooner of kin with it, and so suited to it. Satan and the flesh could have ~~nothing~~ *nothing* near so much hope of prevalency over the spirit, were it not for their lurking in, and alluring to the world. Besides, the necessary use of the things of the world, doth give yet further advantage both to Satan, and to the flesh, and to the world, of stealing in into the heart and life and motions even of Disciples, somewhat more then will stand with the nature and life of Christ. How can this nature chuse but love and be friendly to that, which is so necessary and serviceable to it? And yet, *if any man love the world, or the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

So that great is the fight between God and the world,
(in

(in every dispensation of God's) for the love of the heart. And in every dispensation, they are at length overcome by the world, who are not truly born, and deeply rooted in the nature and power of God. He that is begotten of the seed of life, he that is indeed of God, he turns toward God, and from the world. And though the world may, on the one side, all manner of waies catch at him, and on the other side persecute him, even to the utmost; yet being in the nature of his spirit a stranger to the world, and one with God, he still withdraws from the world, notwithstanding all its pleasures and accommodativeness to his present state, and notwithstanding all the hardships he meets with for neglecting it. And this is the reason also, why the natural spirit, though it be drawn as it were out of the world, by the light and power of some dispensation of God, yet is still apt to return: *because it is of the world*. In its nature (in the midst of all this light and power whereby it seems so changed) it is still the same with the world; and so at length, some way or other, it cometh naturally to receive and entertain some prejudice against that light, which made it out of love with the world: And when it is once prejudiced against that which withdrew and preserved it from the world, what is there left to hinder its returning to the world?

And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith.

That which makes those which are born of God, victorious over the world, is the faith which they have received from God. By faith they were at first led out of the world, and by faith they are preserved from returning back unto it. The *light of faith* damps all the beauty and takingness of the world. There is no loveliness in the world, or in any thing of the world, to the eye of faith. Faith sees the world to be a weak, filthy, loathsome thing in its whole nature, course, and in all the enjoyments it

can yeild in this present state. And the *power of faith* is too strong for all the temptations of the world. Faith has better things in pursuit, even the true treasure, and it loaths to turn aside toward the trash of the world. It so leavens the heart with the sweet and pure leaven of life, that it cannot but hate all the sour leaven of the world. The doctrine of faith makes the world loathsome, even to the very natural understanding: but the nature, the life, the spirit, the essence of faith makes it utterly and eternally abominable, to the nature of that spirit which is born and taught of God. Where-ever the world prevails, faith must be extinguished, or at least laid a sleep: for where-ever faith is and lives, the world cannot but be espied and rejected in all its deceitful disguises and enticements. But it is not every faith that will do this, but only *our faith*; only the True Faith of the True-born Seed.

VER. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

The world is to be overcome. The spirit of man will fight with it, and undertake to do it. Man will discover and turn from the loathsomeness and unloveliness of the world. Disciples, in every dispensation, think to do it much more. But they are all deceived, and again entangled and overcome by the world: and that alone can overcome the world, which receiveth a stronger principle, and believeth in him who is stronger then the World.

Christ, the Son of God, is the only conqueror of the world. The world is too hard for every spirit, but his. The world hath hold enough of every nature but his, to bewitch and ensnare it. Who therefore can deal with the world and overcome it, but he that believeth in the Son?

But

But he that knoweth how by faith to draw from the Son of God, against the world, that power and vertue which is above the world, and which knoweth not how to yield unto, but to subject the world :

VER. 6. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Iesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood : and it is the spirit that beareth witness, because the spirit is truth.*

This same Son of God on whom the seed of God believe, and from whom they draw the vertue, strength, and victory of faith, This is he who came to be the Saviour of his lost people ; and he came in, with, or by that which was necessary toward their salvation, viz. *water and blood*. He came *in* *water* & *blood*, & *by* *water* & *blood*. There is no saving without water and blood. He that is the Saviour must come by both. God did provide a Saviour, and he came by both, and *this is he*, even *Iesus Christ*. He received the water and blood from the Father, he faithfully letteth it out upon the World, and by it he effectually saveth such as are changed by it.

These are the two great types of salvation. *Water and Blood*. *Water* doth signify the nature of the new creature in its weak estate, which entering into this creation washeth and reneweth it. It is the truth and purity of life, molded into such a seed, as may be fit to enter into and leaven these fleshy vessels. *Blood* doth signify the death of this new-creature, which it is here to undergo in the flesh. The powring out of the blood, is the parting with the life, which is in the blood. After it hath lived, and grown, and cleansed the flesh, it must give up its own life with the life of the flesh, or fleshy nature, wherein it hath lived. Thus Christ the forerunner came, he came by both: *Not by water only*, not by a new life, nature, and

spirit alone, but by the blood of that nature, life, and spirit also. *Out of his side came both water and blood.* And he did this as a pattern, wherein all his are to follow him, not in his water-baptism only, but in his blood-baptism also.

That came. This is the way he went to life himself; to that Crown of Life, toward which he journeyed here in the flesh: This is the way he went toward the redemption of his people, viz. *by water and blood.* And this is the way he hath chalked out: for *he that will save his life, shall lose it.* What life soever it is that the nature of man would save, it shall be sure to loose.

And it is the spirit that beareth witness.

God sent the Spirit with Christ to accompany him, and bear him witness in all that he is and does. Christ is the witness of the Father, and the Spirit is the witness of Christ. Christ testifieth of the life and love that is in the Father, and the Spirit testifieth of what Christ hath received from the Father, yea he observeth and beareth witness to his nature, his designs, his motions, yea the whole course and current of his life and death.

And the Father hath chosen him for the witness, because he is *truth*, or *the truth*. And indeed well it is both for Christ and his Seed, for they would be deeply injured, if there were any other witness. If they did witness concerning one another, in the flesh, they would injure one another: Nay a mans own fleshly nature is not able to give a true testimony concerning the life, or any of its motions in him. *Every man is a liar:* But *the Spirit is truth.* His nature is truth, his eye is truth. He is true in every thing that he beholdeth, in every thing that he speaketh. He is the inmost substance of things, in whom there cannot be the least shadow of turning from the perfection of truth. Other things are but true derivatively from him, but he is true in and of himself. Other things

so far tast of and utter truth, as they partake of him, and speak from and according to him: but he is the inward truth and substance both of the Nature of the Father, and of his Christ.

VER. 7. *For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.*

This is the reason why the *Spirit* must needs be the truth, because he is the same with the *Father*, and the word: So that if there be truth any where, he is it, or the same with it, which is alone.

The same thing is testified both in Heaven and Earth. Christ is the Saviour and Lord of life in both, and he hath a full testimony given in both unto his life and salvation, even by three witnesses.

There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit.

In Heaven, where God dwels, where God discovers himself, where things are seen and known by his immediate light and brightness, there are three very compleat witnesses, *The Father, the Word, and the Spirit.*

The Father is the Fountain, the original of life, the spring and substance of all natures, both flesh and Spirit. Whatsoever can be found any where else, it came from the Father, and hath its foundation and being in the Father. *The Word*, or Son, is the immediate off-spring of the Father. He is the exact image of the Father, and hath all that was in the Father, begotten and brought forth in him by the Father. He is the compleat receptacle of all the Fathers being, life, and fulness. And as the Father is excellent in giving and bringing forth all in the Son: so the Son is also excellent, in being able to receive and contain all of the Father. *The Spirit* is the breath arising from

from both these, which receives, and contains, and is both their fulness. This breath breaths forth of them all that is breathed forth, either in the first or second creation; and can either let into, or out of the Godhead (as I may so say) according to the nature and pleasure of life. Now these three, in the cleanness and brightness of one and the same light, testify the same thing.

And these three are one. They are three, and yet one. They are distinct, and yet the same. Here is the most full and perfect distinction, and yet the most compleat union. For in this distinction each has all, and yet all are but one. One, in all they are; One, in all they speak; One, in all they do. Look on all other things; neither their division nor union is compleat. There is one creation divided from another creation, and one parcel of one creation divided from other parcels of the same creation, and yet they meet again in one common nature, root, and principle: but neither their separation nor meeting is perfect. But here is perfection; Perfection of Division, Perfection of Union.

VER. 8. *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, and these three agree in one.*

The brightness of God, the abundant opening of life is in Heaven, which is the presence-chamber of the great King: but on earth there are some manifestations of him likewise. In earth the same life lives and appears, though clouded with too thick a veil for the earthly eye to pierce through: yet he is here also after a sort to be seen and beheld in the spirit, by the eye of the spirit. There is the testimony of God concerning life, to be found on earth as well as in heaven. And it is a full testimony also: for the witnesses here, are likewise three, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.

There

There is the *Spirit* of God which begets, he is one witness. He witnesseth to the truth and life of the Son, in the spirits of those whom he begets. And there is that which is begotten by him, the *Water*, whereof the new creature is formed and consisteth, that also witnesseth. And the *Blood*, wherewith his conscience is at first washed, and afterward continually sprinkled from sin, (which is not the blood of the old creation, but the blood of the New Covenant,) that also witnesseth. These are all standing witnesses in the spirits of those to whom God speaks and reveals the Son, and the life and salvation, which is in the Son, and which he bestoweth upon them with the Son.

And these three agree in one. as to the Son.

These three streams run all into one. They agree in one common nature. They agree in one common testimony. The *Water* hath the same nature with the *Blood*, and the *Blood* hath the same nature with the *Water*, and both have the same nature with the *Spirit*, and the *Spirit* hath the same nature with them both. They have all likewise the same mouth, and speak the same thing. They are all of the Son, and they bear witness to him that he is the Son, that he hath the life, and that he is the Saviour.

VER. 9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.*

If we have ground to believe and receive the witness of men, either concerning the things of the world or the things of God, then have we much more ground to believe and receive the witness of God concerning his Son: for the witness of God is greater than the witness of men can be, in either of these respects. The witness of God

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concerning Christ and spiritual things, is greater then the witness of man can be concerning any earthly things: and the witness of Gods own Spirit, *Water* and *Blood*, is greater then any external witness of Prophets or Apostles can be.

It hath pleased God to give testimony through men, concerning his Son: *To him give all the Prophet witness*, &c. This, those who are of God do acknowledg and receive: *Wisdom is justified of her children*. But yet this is the testimony of men. *Ye sent unto Iohn, and he bare witness unto the truth: but I receive not the witness of man*, Joh. 5. 33, 34. This testimony is very proper for, and useful to the seed in its season, but there is no room for it in Heaven, which is filled with the presence and voice of the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*; no nor on Earth, where the *Spirit*, the *Water* and the *Blood*, in the light of their own nature, manifest the truth from God. ¶

VER. 10. *He that beleeueth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that beleeueth not God, hath made him a liar, because he beleeueth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

In that day of the Gospel, and of the spiritual light thereof, God held forth the truths, in the light, unto the world. The Spirit and the Water and the Blood, were the testimonies of God upon earth even unto men. The Spirit spake in various gifts and manifestations, and the Water and the Blood spake in various types and representations. Now he who was of the light, he was gathered by the light; and he had the truth and substance of that given him within (in his own spirit) whereof in the world there was but the sound.

That which distinguishes men is their owning or rejecting of the light, their receiving that which is held forth

in the true demonstration of light, or their turning from it. Their receiving of the Son, in that new principle of life which shoots forth in him from the Father; or their refusing of him, and sticking to their old principle of life and righteousness according to the Law of their own nature.

This then was the different estate of that age. Some were born of the light, and brought forth in the light, such did see and feel, and believe the vertue of life in the Son. These had not only the external witness of Christ and his Apostles, or of the Spirit, Water and Blood in several outward gifts and representations, but they had the witness of life within them, they had the witness of the Spirit, Water and Blood, in their own spirits, speaking Christ to be the Son. Again some were of the dark nature, spirit and principle, and could not believe, but according to the nature of unbelief give God the lye, which their not believing doth, though perhaps not their sense: for if they did believe the Son, they would (and very easily they might, while the light and power of life stands by, ready to assist all that turn toward it) desert their old station and principle, and seek to the Son for a new principle and place in the creation of God. In that therefore they do not believe, but stand still where they are, seeking life and righteousness either in the purity of nature, in the purity of the Law, or in the purity of any of the Gospel observations according to the flesh, they hereby testify against God, and in the most intimate nature and course of their spirits (even in their purest desires, and most zealous duties and practises of religion) give him the lye.

concerning Christ and spiritual things, is greater then the witness of man can be concerning any earthly things: and the witness of Gods own *Spirit*, *Water* and *Blood*, is greater then any external witness of Prophets or Apostles can be.

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VER. 11. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son.*

Now if ye would know particularly what the record is, which the *Father, Word and Spirit* testify in Heaven, and which the *Spirit, Water and Blood* testify on earth, in the spirits of them that believe; why this is it. That that life which God hath bestowed upon us (whom he hath renewed in the spirits of our minds, and taught to believe aright from the root of the new-birth) is no other then *Eternal life*, no other then the life of his own eternal nature, which consisteth not in duration of time (as we weakly in the flesh are apt to apprehend eternity to do) but in a nature of a different kind from all other transitory and transient natures (This is also true concerning eternal fire, eternal wrath, eternal death, eternal joy, eternal love, eternal peace, and all other eternal things.)

God hath given to us eternal life.

That seed of life which he hath sown in us, is his own seed, and hath his own nature. It is that which the eternal spirit lives in, exercises, and nurtures up: and when it is grown up to its maturity in the spirit, it shall live the life of eternity with the spirit for ever. That life which God hath given to true believers is not a fading thing, cannot be overcome by death, but by receiving and having the vaile of death drawn over it, enters into the freshness, fulness and perfection of life. At this present, in this frail estate, we see not, we understand not, we cannot measure this life, but we have a cleer testimony that we have it.

And this life is in his Son.

It is the Son alone to whom the Father hath made over himself, whom the Father hath begotten in his own life, and into whom he hath emptied all his spirit of life. So
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that life and spirit is confined to the Son, and is only to be found with the Son; and where the Son is given. There is no way for a man to move toward this life, by casting himself into any form or way of religion whatsoever, but only by receiving the Son, when the Father gives him out in the truth of life and power.

VER. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.*

Life is an inseparable concomitant of the nature of the Son. He who hath the seed of the Son sown in him, he who hath the same seed of life sown in his spirit which God did sow in the humanity of his anointed one, he whose nature and spirit is leavened with the Nature and Spirit of the Son, and hath the Spirit of the Son abiding upon him, and dwelling in him, he hath life. He that hath him in whom the life is, he hath also the life which is in him. But he which hath not him, he that hath not the seed of the Son, nor the Son present with that seed in his spirit, though he may have some taste of, and some pleasure in that which he calls life, yet he must needs be remote from that which is indeed the life. Here is life: not to walk in such or such waies of strictness and devotion, (which the seriousness of the natural spirit most naturally fals in with) but to be in union with the Son, to have the seed of the Son sown in the spirit, and the Son dwelling in that seed, and leading the soul through darkneses, through wildernesses, through deaths and distresses, through multitudes of such strange paths, as the devoutest sorts of flesh cannot but abhor, condemn and turn from, into the Kingdom of the Father.

VER. 13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

The *Scriptures* were not written unto the world, or for the world, but unto the Church, and for the Church. The *Scriptures* are holy, and are for holy eyes, and for holy hearts. Man cannot possibly make any good use of the *Scriptures*, but only prophane them, until his eyes be first enlightened, and his heart sanctified by the spirit. But to what an height of prophaneſs is the spirit of man grown? Every one will be gueſſing at the ſence of *Scriptures*, (and opening both the doctrine and propheſies thereof,) and faſtening his own imaginations upon them as the voice and meaning of the Spirit of God. O that it would pleaſe God once to make us humble and ſober, and to deliver us from this great ſnare, which wholly ſtops up the way of light, and puts us out of a capacity of reaping the true benefit of the *Scriptures*!

The *Scriptures* were written to believers, to believers under the Law, to believers under the Goſpel, and are uſeful to believers. Thoſe things which were directed by the Spirit of God to them in that ſtate, were very proper for them. And if any man could thus ſpeak, in light and ſeaſon to another, he might be owned a miniſter unto him, and be acknowledged to have the tongue of the learned. But the greateſt wiſdom, literature, and experience of the human ſpirit, wil never go for learning with Chriſt. The building of his Temple was not begun thus, nor can there be this way any true addition made to it.

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These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.

The name of any thing is that representation or signification of its nature, whereby it is distinctly discovered in it self, and distinguished from all other things. And thus every thing both in Heaven and Earth hath its name from God the Father. And according to this are the books written: for there is a nature which under all its appearances of light, with all its names of life, under al manner of varieties, is written to death and destruction, and there is also a nature which is written to life and salvation.

The name of the Son of God is that particular representation of his nature, which God hath publicly read to the world, but more distinctly opened to the spirits of those who are born of him, and taught by him. God hath told the world that HE is the first-born of his life and strength, and fitted in his nature and appointed by him to be the Saviour of that which is lost, and accordingly he gives him names in the letter, viz. *The Son of God, Jesus* the Saviour, *Christ* the anointed: but to those who are born again he opens, and dilates the nature of the Son, and his salvation, and anointing within their spirits.

Hereupon it is that they cannot but believe. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.* And hereby they are distinguished from the world who cannot believe in spirit, who cannot believe from a new root in themselves, but only according to a literal expression of things, which they understand not in the light of the eternal nature, but only according to the flesh, and so according to their understanding must their faith needs be, viz. a fastening upon Christ, and raising great expectations from him according to the flesh, all which will come to nothing: but the other who are new-formed in the bosome of the eternal

eternal light, they have the inward and true revelation of the name of Christ in that light, and they do truly believe in him. Their nature hangs upon his nature for the spirit and vertue of the oyl of life, from which it is, and by which alone it lives. The faith of the one of these is but the faith of their understanding and good will toward salvation, The faith of the other is the faith of their heart, the faith of their nature.

That ye may know that ye have eternal life.

By the opening of light, by the opening of the understanding (which light sutablely held out, alwayes does) those who are in the light come to know. Thus it is insensible, in rationals, in spirituals. There may be the seed of eternal life sown in this earth, yea and over-spread this earth like leaven, and yet not be known by this earth. But when the seed is opened and named to the eye of the spirit, then the spirit begins to know it. God hath promised eternal life to them that believe, and he hath given it them, and would have them know they have it, and reap the sweet comfort and delight which flows from it: therefore doth he open the way and course of it, and give full testimony to it, that the soul might rest satisfied in it, and rejoyce in him through it. Thus it is in the time of light and life, but far otherwise in the times of death and darknes.

And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Light begets faith, and light increases faith. It doth not only draw out the comfort of the present faith, but it causeth both the faith and comfort to grow and fructifie. The more the soul hears of the name of the Son, and the more it comes to understand the nature of that eternal life which is in him; the more is its desire of a fuller taste of eternal life, and the more is its faith strengthened and drawn forth toward him.

VER. 14. *And this is the confidence that we have towards him, that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us.*

These things I write to settle and strengthen your assurance, faith and confidence: and this is the particular confidence which they tend to strengthen in you, namely, that his ear is open to all the desires and requests of your souls, which are formed according to his will.

The whole life and rest of the soul lies in Faith and Prayer. Faith breaths it self forth in prayer: and the praying Spirit is satisfied in believing the good will of him to whom it prays. Faith doth not see that it is heard, but it believes: and by believing it is as well for the present contented, as if it did see. Nay it desireth not sight at present, but only the firm footing and right drawing forth of its confidence.

The square of prayer is the will of God. This is the adequate rule of all desires, of all motions, of all hopes, of all faith. The will of the creature undoes it self; in the will of the Creator is its life and salvation. He that is taught of God, learns to deny his own will, and is never afterward to allow himself so much as any desire according to it; much less to proceed so far therein, as to offer it up in prayer to God. He that is in the light esteems no will, but the will of God, loathes his own will, further then it is destroyed and brought forth anew in the will of God; and desires to have none of its requests heard, further then they are suitable to that, and is sure that so far as they are suitable to that, they cannot but be heard. Now this is very sweet and comfortable in this dark state, to feel a living nature within, and to be sure that all the desires and breathings of that nature come in to the presence of the fountain of its life.

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VER. 15. *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

If we be heard, we must needs be answered. It is impossible for the Father to deny any thing to the child, which he hath learned of him to ask according to his will. Indeed if we ask any thing according to our own will, or the will of the flesh, he cannot in faithfulness hear us: but what our spirits desire in true life, from a true nature, according to the true rule of goodness and righteousness, he cannot possibly deny us. Now mark what a strange kind of knowledge and assurance the knowledge and assurance of a beleever is; it is the knowledge of faith, the assurance of faith: by believing he is assured. Indeed some petitions are sensibly answered: but for the most part, as they pray in faith, so they receive an answer by faith, that is, By faith they know that they must needs be answered, that they must needs receive the petition which they desire, though particularly and sensibly they perceive it not.

VER. 16. *If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life: to them that sin not unto death: There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

God doth not hear us only for our selves, but he also heareth the same breath of life in us when it panteth after the salvation of others. There is not a request that we can put up for a brother according to his will, but he heareth us. And it is according to his will, that we should pray for the remission of our brothers sin, as well as of our own. If we fall in that dispensation of life wherein we are set,

set, we are to pray to the fountain of that life to raise us up again: and if our brother fall, we are to pray that he may be raised and live again. And the efficacy of this prayer shall be so great, that it shall give life unto his brother.

A brother may sin so as may strike him dead for the present: and yet he may not be utterly dead. There is a life given in dispensations, and that life lieth subject to death by sin. There is a sin, or a kind of sins absolutely kills, for which there is no more sacrifice and redemption under that dispensation of the Gospel; and for these those that are brought forth in the light of the dispensation of the Gospel are not to pray. God hath revealed, that the work that is now to be done upon them, is by the fierceness and severity of the fire of his wrath, to which they are freely to be given up, and no essay of prayer made use of to rescue them. But there may be some knocked down by violence, or dangerously fallen by great weakness, or grievously sick, even unto death: For these, those who are strong in life and faith are bound to pray, and the prayer of faith shall prevail to save these weak, sick, fallen ones, and to give them fresh life and strength in that dispensation of the Gospel.

VER. 17. *All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death.*

The Apostle here declares the general nature of sin, it is *unrighteousness*, either unrighteousness toward God, or unrighteousness toward his brother, or unrighteousness toward his neighbour, or unrighteousness toward the creature: and all manner of unrighteousness toward any of these is sin. And this unrighteousness leads unto death (every motion or act of sin is a step of death,) but doth not alwaies effect death. *There is a sin not unto death.*

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There are two kinds of sins or sinning, a sinning unto death, and a sinning not unto death, or a sinning wilfully, and a sinning weakly. Under the Law and under the Gospel, the one of these did kil, the other did not. *He that doth ought presumptuously, shall be cut off, and his iniquity shall be upon him*, saith the Law, Numb. 15. 30, 31. And, *if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin*, saith the Gospel, Heb. 10. 26. The force of this distinction lies in the nature of the will. The greatest weakness, in all its varieties under each dispensation is to be forgiven, but not the smallest wilfulness: (for it is not the degree of sin, but the nature of sin which is so considerable with God.) yea all the weaknesses of the will are to be forgiven: but where the nature of the will is in the midst of light bent against God, and cometh forth in the least kind presumptuously against him, there is no remission: He that denies Christ, his Blood, his Spirit through ignorance or weakness, is easily pittied and pardoned by him who tenderly measureth all our frailties, in every dispensation of his towards us; but he who in the least denies him understandingly, through the contrariety and opposition of the nature of his heart and spirit against him, is neither to be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come, but is to be sealed up for the present, and given up at last to the judgment and wrath of the great day.

VER. 18. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

There is a threefold birth of God. A birth under the dispensation of the Law, a birth under the dispensation of the Gospel, and a birth in the Nature and Life of Gods own Spirit.

It is God who begets men to righteousness and holiness under the Law, and according to the Law. It is God who begets men to holiness and righteousness under the Gospel, and according to the Gospel. And this is only in a sense, according to their state, concerning them both, that they *sin not*.

Man who is begotten by God according to the Law, walking with him by the assistance of his Spirit in that dispensation, according to the light and truth thereof, *sins not*: And he that is begotten according to the Gospel, walking with God in the light and spirit thereof, *sins not* neither: Yea those sins and weaknesses which accompany his present state, are still so blotted out by the sacrifices and sacrifice which God hath appointed, that he is not a sinner according to the judgment of the Law, or of the Gospel. Man in his greatest righteousness, is a sinner: but the redeemed of the Lord, either under the Law or under the Gospel, in the midst of their greatest failings and weaknesses, are not transgressors. God hath appointed such a way of blotting out iniquity from his *Jacob* and *Israel*, that he seeth no sin in them. And if they be not sinners before him, if he say they *sin not*, who shall accuse them?

But yet there is a fuller birth from God, whereof both the other are but shadows. There is a birth in the eternal nature. There is a seed of God sown in some vessels of earth under each dispensation: and when this seed hath overspread that earth, having thoroughly leavened it, and is brought forth in it, and bringeth forth it within it self: then is a man indeed born of God. There is indeed a sweet representation of the new birth in dispensations, which make a real change of a man from what he was before, and to him are a great and strange new-birth; yet there may be the seed of the very truth already sown, in so much as the true nature and substance of a son may be

given; but the child is not yet born. So that such persons may now be called holy sinners, and may be drawn nigh to God, or thrust very far from him: any thing, what he pleaseth. This mixed estate of theirs affords him all varieties of actions towards them, and exposeth them to all kind of miseries and extremities, which the divine wisdom seeth good to exercise them with. But when they are indeed born, when they are indeed brought forth in the nature of his spirit, and their natures leavened with his substance, and changed into his likeness, then they shall not be able to sin any more, then this saying shall be read in perfect truth, *He that is born of God, sinneth not.* There was a taste of this given in those dayes, wherein the power and light of life was so great, that *Satan fell down like lightning* before it: but *Sin* and *Satan* have since recovered themselves again, and held even the holy seed in bondage.

We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not.

A generation from God, a birth from God purgeth away sin. God doth not beget or bring forth a defiled thing. The people of the Jews, though very stubborn and filthy, yet he made them an holy people. So far as they were begotten, they were holy: and so far as they lived in that life, they lived holily. The *believing Gentiles*, who were begotten more spiritually, even in the image and shadow of the eternal covenant, they were drawn neerer to God in a more inward and spirituall holiness, and set at a much further distance from sin. But they who are begotten and born in the eternall nature, are wholly divorced from it, and can no more bring forth the fruits of that whereto their nature is slain, and the root whereof is slain in them.

And this *we know*. They who are in the light see the truth. The eternall life and nature lying hid in, and springing up in the spirits of disciples in that age, did make the course and things of life very manifest. Sin could not come

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neer the power of that life, but as fast as it was discovered, it was mastered. Though they could not attain, yet they pressed after, and had a taste even of the purity of the resurrection: yea, such was the power of life in some, that though the light in the Lord might search further then they knew, yet the light in themselves could not condemn them, as Paul expressly affirmeth concerning himself, 1 Cor. 4. 4. *For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

But he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself.

There is a preservative in the light of the Lord against the darkness of the evil one. The light of the Law was a preservative under the Law, and the light of the Gospel was so also under the Gospel. The people of God under every dispensation are a redeemed people, snatched out of the hands of the enemy, and fenced against the strength of the enemy. As Satan fortieth his regions and territories against God, so God fortieth all his regions and territories against Satan. And as God letteth into the spirits of his people, light and power sufficient to conquer their spirits, and to bring them out of the Kingdom of Satan into his Kingdom, so he leaveth with them, and letteth out upon them light and power sufficient to preserve them against all the fresh assaults of Satan. And he that is true-born, he that is truly begotten and brought forth in the true light of life, he keepeth within that line of life, and suffereth not his spirit to wander into the dark wisdom, nature, and principles of the world, where Satan ruleth and cannot but prevail. The spirit of man is careless in the things and wayes of God, making use of them only to serve his own turn: but he that knows the nature of the purity and life of God in any of his dispensations, cannot but rejoyce in his redemption, and give up his spirit to all labours and sufferings (which all dispensations are full of) to the preserving and perfecting thereof.

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And the wicked overcometh him not.

There is a wicked one, a fountain of wickedness, one that breaths the spawn of wickedness into every thing he can come near, and cheriseth and perfecteth that wickedness, unless he be prevented. Now he that is redeemed by light, is possessed by light, he that is preserved by light, he who he that liveth & walketh in the light of the Lord, he is out of the reach of this evil one, he is not a fit vessel to receive the seed of evil, nor can Satan infuse his evil into him. Satan can fasten upon any thing that is in the world, yea, he could and did fasten upon him formerly, while he was in the world, but cannot now since he hath been translated into another spirit, and since another spirit hath been formed in him.

V. ER. 19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth (or is placed) in the wicked one.*

We do not onely know, that whatsoever is born of God is fortified against, and set out of the reach of that wicked one; but we know that we are of God, and that the light and power of God hath translated us out of his reach. We know the difference between that estate wherein God hath set us, and the world which God hath left in his possession. Indeed the spirit of the world is wrapped up in the spirit of Satan, and there he soweth and bringeth forth his wickedness as he pleaseth. *The whole world*, every worldly thing, every worldly nature, all the excellencies of this world, not onely the barbarisme, enmity, prophanness, &c. but all the civility, morality, love, wisdom, righteousness, religion of this world (for in these doth the Prince of darkness command, yea, and driveth his greatest and most subtle trade) they lie in the wicked one, and are but the receptacles, bringers forth, and propagators of his wickedness. That only which is of
God

God in the new nature and power of life, that only which is created and formed in the Nature, Spirit and Life of Christ Jesus, is free from him. Now such of these as are brought forth in the light, in whom the seed and principle of life is advanced to live, such know their own state, and the state of the world, and their distinction from the world. They see clearly from whence they came, what they now are, and in what condition that is which is left behind them. But foolish vain man, who condemneth the world, thinking that he hath found firm ground of justification in Christ, and yet is but the same in the nature of his spirit with the world, he will be exceedingly ashamed when his veil of righteousness and holiness is plucked off from him, and he opened in the filthiness of the nature of his own spirit.

V. E. R. 20. *And we know that the Son of God is come.*

The great promise and expectation under the Law was of the coming of the *Messiah*, who was the Son of God. Great life and glory was he to bring with him. Both sons and servants, yea and the whole creation were to lye in bonds, until they should be set free by that power and liberty of the Son; which he bringeth with him at his coming. He was to be the especial Saviour of his people from their sins, and from the whole tyranny of the darkness and corruption of Satan. He was to make them an Holy People, yea Kings and Priests to God in the Spirit. He was to form and bring forth the true, the living, the abiding Temple, and to fill it with the Glory of God.

Now ye who are of God, know that this promise of life is in a great degree already fulfilled. He is already come the first time, and hath given a taste of the true life and redemption that is in him; yea and hath laid a firm foundation of his second coming, wherein he will per-

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fect the dispensation of life. So that we do not only know that we are of God, and that his Son will certainly redeem us; but that he is already come, and hath begun to rescue us out of the hands of our enemies, and to open to us, and seat us in the bosome of life.

And hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.

There is a true one, who is distinct from all false appearances, and the ground-work and substance of all true ones. This true one is alone known by the understanding which himself gives. The understanding of man is broke, and cannot receive or entertain the true one. The understanding of man is corrupt, and cannot believe him to be the true one, but rejecteth him for a deceiver, and setteth up the liar in stead of him. So that there is no way of knowing him, but by that understanding which himself gives. As he gives faith, repentance, and remission of sins, so he also gives a heart to receive them. And as he gives the light and knowledg of the true one, so he also gives such an understanding as may let it in, such an eye as may see in this light. This is the great mistake of mans nature and spirit; He makes no question but if God would please to reveal things to him, he would acknowledg, receive and embrace them; yea if God would but plainly manifest his will and commands, he would not fail to worship and obey them, not at all comprehending how far distant he is from that eye and heart which can alone do this.

And we are in him that is true.

As God forms in his people a true Spirit, so he places that Spirit in the region and nature of truth. As he begets them of Christ, so he seats them in Christ. He sows the life here in this earth, and the Tabernacle thereof is in this outward world, but the life it self is surrounded with, and preserved in the Spirit of life. It may dart forth

forth and shine through this earth upon the world, but it is hid from the world. The eye of the world, the nature of the world, the spirit of the world, the heart of the world can by no means reach it. This is the safety of all dispensations, they are within God according to the Law of the dispensation: and this is the everlasting safety of the seed, they are within God according to the Law of that life which comprehends all dispensations. And this is the reason that they can live so abundantly in any dispensation, when their life is brought forth in it, because their life is so far above it.

In his Son Jesus Christ.

We are in God in Christ. We come from the truth of the God-head in Christ, and we are transplanted into, grafted in, and surrounded with the God-head in Christ. In Christ we meet with, and are taken into the true root and center of life. He is the Son, he is the Saviour, he is the Anointed, yea he is the Truth. That Fountain of Life which is in the Father, is his, and in him, nay it is he, for he and the Father are the ^{one} same. The Spirit and breath of truth and life is his also, yea he is that breath, he is that Spirit, *The Lord is that Spirit.*

This is the true God, and eternal life.

This Son, this Jesus, this Christ, from whom we came, who hath given us an understanding to know God, and in whom we are, this is the very God. There is no other truth or substance but he. He is the light, he is the life. The life of eternity is comprehended in his nature, and is no where to be found but in him and with him. The Father hath the God-head, and liveth the life of eternity no where but in him. This is the voice of the seed in the light, **THERE IS NO GOD BUT OUR JESUS, ANY NOR ~~ANY~~ ETERNAL LIFE, BUT HE.**

VER. 21. *Little children, keep your selves from Idols, Amen.*

An Idol is nothing, or that which is not, acknowledged, set up, and worshipped in stead of that which is. It is a false representation of the true God, arising either from the imagination of the mind, or from some revelation or suggestion from the contrary anointing, the whole strength of whose nature and art applieth it self to deceive with false appearances of truth. If a man apprehend otherwise concerning the Nature of God, the will of God, the knowledge of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, the holiness and righteousness of God, the love of God, the mercy and goodness of God, the wrath and severity of God, then it is he setteth up an Idol, or rather so many Idols. (For though there is but one God, one Truth, one Image, which is also the same with the truth and substance which it represents, yet there are many Idols, and false apparitions and appearances.) He that looketh upon, and accounteth of God as such a punisher of evil as he is not, or as such a Saviour as he is not, setteth up an Idol, and all his worship of God, both inward and outward, his believing in God, his hoping from God, his love to God, his waiting, his praying, his humbling himself before God, his admiring of God, his rejoycing and delighting himself in God, &c. All these, and whatsoever else he doth, are but so many several strains of Idolatry: for he doth not any of these to the truth, to the true God and Saviour, but to that imagination and apprehension of God which he himself hath set up, which is not God, but passeth away with the vanity of that mind from whence it came.

This duly considered, may help to discover how easy it is for man in every condition, and under every dispensation

sation to run out into idolatry. Nay it is impossible for the spirit of man to be withheld from Idolatry, unless it be taught to keep close to the revelation of truth, whether in nature, or according to the light of any dispensation. We wonder at the stupidity and blockheads of the *Jews*, in setting up so many foolish Idols, not observing the same nature and spirit in our selves, which would have done the same thing, had we been under the same dispensation, yea do we not the very same thing in our way? If at any time we have any touch of truth, how quickly do we lose it, and become vain and fleshy, even in our spiritual imaginations!

The great danger to the life of every dispensation is Idolatry. This was that which was so deadly to the life dispensed to the *Jews*, viz. Idolatry sutable to their dispensation: And this also was the thing of great danger to *Christians*, viz. Idolatry sutable to their dispensation. If the *Jews* had kept close with God, and not run after Idols, they might have continued and enjoyed the sweetness of their dispensation. And if *Christians* had abode in the truth, the truth would have kept them free from Idolatry, and from that dangerous loss which hath befallen that estate also. Yea if persons now adaies could possibly attain to the true knowledg and worship of God, they should live. But Idolatry slays all, even *Ephraim the dear Son, the pleasant child, who is joyned to idols*, and whose Idols will remain with him, til God come and cleanse his spirit with his Spirit of judgment and burning, and then *Ephraim* will cast away all his Idols, saying unto them, *Get ye hence, what have I any more to do with you? Away with all vain imaginations and apprehensions of God according to the flesh.* When God once appears in the true nature of his spirit, and consumes all the vanity and darkness of mans spirit, there will be no more place for these, nor no more desire after them, or delight in them. These

spiritual toys and gawdy appearances, may at present feed the vanity of a weak childish spirit and estate, but they cannot at all profit in the truth, but are very disadvantageous to the happiness and enjoyment of every true life, even for the present, and must needs prove loss in the end. Therefore *little children*, ye who are begotten, born, and newly brought forth in the truth, keep close to the truth of that eternal life and nature, wherein ye are now enwrapped. Avoid all the Idols of the fleshly spirit, and of Antichrist, keeping close to your own anointing, and the enjoyment of your life in the present dispensation will be sweet and safe, and your attainment of the Crown certain. Amen.

F I N I S.



Some *Errata's* more prejudicial to the sense may be thus corrected (Many mis-pointings, especially relating to Commas and Parenthesis, the Reader by his serious consideration of the matter, is desired to amend the error of.)

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